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The Works of

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

With a General Introduction by

JULES CLARETIE

v.21

MADAME PANTALON

Translated into English by

EDITH MARY NORRIS

THE FREDERICK J. QUINBY COMPANY

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CHAPTER I

Two Friends. Captain de Vabeaupont and His Cabin Boy

On the Place de la Bourse, nearly opposite the Vaudeville theatre, that at the time of which we write, the year 1867, had not as yet been removed to its new home in the Chaussée-d'Antin, two young men met, looked at each other in surprise, stopped suddenly, and heartily shaking hands exclaimed at one and the same time,—

"Why, Adolphe!"

"Frédéric!"

"What a lucky chance!"

"So it is; why, for six months I haven't caught sight of you! Where have you been hiding?"

"My dear fellow, I've been hidden in Russia, and very well hidden from head to foot in furs, to guard me from the intense cold, I can assure you."

"And what were you doing in Russia? You are not an actor, you are not a painter, ah, I had forgotten that you were a doctor! An amateur physician, that is to say, for I believe you have not had much practice as yet, although you have received your degree."

"Yes, I have received my degree; but I have come into some property, which obviates the necessity of my following medicine, except in my leisure moments. As for that, travel is very useful to one who wishes to seek prescriptions to preserve the health of his friends or his patients."

"You were always fond of going about and seeing different countries; you are a regular tourist."

"Somewhat of a tourist, but that is beginning to pass. I am getting close on to thirty, I think I shall attain that age next month, and the desire for travel lessens as one grows stouter."

"By Jove! I ought to know how old you are, since we were born in the same year and month, and even on the same day, I think. Yes, my dear Frédéric Duvassel, we shall be thirty on the twenty-first of next month."

"Really! You are sure it isn't twenty-nine?"

"No, it really is thirty."

"You dear old Adolphe Pantalon! you look as young as possible, with your light hair, blue eyes, and roseleaf skin; and you'll continue to look so for some time to come."

"I am sure I hope so! You with your dark hair and eyes, pale skin and romantic features, heaven knows how many successful love affairs you have had."

"They were not all successful; some of them turned out very badly indeed, I assure you!"

"It was probably some intrigue of that nature that took you to Russia?"

"Not at all, I went there to settle an estate and collect some outstanding debts. That business being settled, I should have liked to explore the country, which is very interesting, very picturesque; but I have a brother here, younger than myself by ten years—"

"Oh, yes, little Gustave!"

"My dear fellow! little Gustave is over twenty years of age; he's a very handsome lad, not very tall, but well-built; he has a charming disposition, as gentle as a lamb, and is as timid as a young lady—that is to say, as a young lady who is timid. But he is still rather childish, rather simple, even, and that is why he needs a guide, a mentor; so, to give him self-confidence, in which he is rather lacking, I am going to have him travel. In four days we leave for England, thence we shall go to Italy; in fact, I want Gustave to learn something of people, society, manners, by visiting other countries. Will it profit him? It pleases me to think it will; at any rate, it can do him no harm. Why, what are you thinking of now, Adolphe? you don't seem to be listening to me, and, strange as it may seem, I like people to listen when I am talking to them. There are some people who care nothing about that, and who, provided they can talk, do not notice whether their audience pays any attention to them or not; you may answer them at cross pur-

poses, but they still go on. They are like those others who, at a social gathering, sit down to the piano and keep on singing when everybody is engaged in private conversation — those people sing and talk for themselves."

"I am listening, my dear fellow! yes, yes, I heard all you said; but I have a good many things on my mind."

"Well, you have rather a strange expression; but I am reassured, since you look cheerful rather than sad."

"Ah, I am going to give you some very astonishing news; however, it is nothing but what's quite natural."

"The deuce! you rouse my curiosity. Let's hear your news."

"I am going to be married, my dear fellow."

"You are going to be married? is it possible? already!"

"Already, you say, why, at thirty years of age, there's no already about it."

"You are going to marry, and why should you do that? You are a lawyer, you have a fortune, and you were so happy."

"Yes, but I marry in the hope of being further so — and then a good many people have said to me, 'Pantalon, why don't you marry? you ought to marry, it gives a young man an assured position in society.'"

"Some people are always meddling with what

does not concern them. I'll wager the ones who said that to you were married."

"Why do you think that?"

"Oh, because — well, never mind! If it is all settled, I hope you've done well. And whom are you going to marry?"

"Mademoiselle Césarine Ducrochet."

"By Jove, where did you pick her up?"

"In society, in very good company indeed. You don't suppose I am marrying blindly. Mademoiselle Césarine is the daughter of an honorable merchant; she early lost both parents and was brought up by a maternal uncle, M. de Vabeaupont, a retired sea captain, who is very rich, has never been married, and who worships his niece, to whom he will leave all his fortune, and to whom he will give a hundred thousand francs on her marriage."

"That's something. And how old is the young lady?"

"Twenty-five."

"Twenty-five! a hundred thousand francs dowry, heiress to a very rich uncle — she must be very ugly, or deformed."

"Not at all. She is tall, well-built, and has very fine features. What made you think she was ugly?"

"Because I don't understand how, with such a fine dowry and so many advantages, she is not married before twenty-five."

"You will understand it perfectly when you

learn that Mademoiselle Césarine was brought up at her uncle's château, where, since she was ten years old, she has done as she pleased. M. de Vabeaupont, who is very old, and laid up with gout a great part of the year, has never opposed his niece in anything, even allowing her to choose her own masters when she desired any; being thus left to herself, you can comprehend that Césarine has become rather — how shall I express it? — rather mannish. She rides on horseback, uses weapons and takes gymnastic exercises just like a man — perhaps does these things better than some men."

"Devil take it! Devil take it!"

"What makes you say that?"

"Tell me the rest."

"Then she got the idea of studying law, the code, of learning Latin — she speaks Latin, my dear fellow!"

"That will make your domestic life felicitous: When you wish to kiss your wife, she will say to you, 'Non possumus.'"

"As you may well imagine, that was only a passing fancy — she will soon forget all that. In fact, used as she had become to following her own will alone, Césarine did not care to marry and exchange her liberty for a bond which would give her a master."

"She was right."

"She refused all the matches which were offered

her, and they were not a few. But her uncle ended by getting vexed about it, and he told her that he should like to see his grandnephews and grand-nieces about him. For the first time he would not give way to her, he would be obeyed, and he took his niece into society, saying to her, 'Take whom you wish for your husband, but take some one.' Then it was that I met her."

"And you, of course, made a conquest of the fair Césarine?"

"It seems so; and, by Jove, I didn't take much pains to do it, for you know I'm not very skilful with women—some one told me that she thought I looked like a good fellow."

"So you do, in fact."

"Also that that pleased her better than the more pretentious manners of bigger swells than I."

"As for you, you fell in love with this damsel straightway, I suppose?"

"In love! oh, by Jove! no. I liked her, thought her very good-looking. She's dark, very dark, in fact, hair, eyes, skin, even, which has a rich warm tinge; her mouth is stern and I think she has a little mustache, but not enough to be unbecoming. In fact, she is a fine-looking person, but one dare not joke with her for fear his pleasantries may be ill-received."

"Well, that will be some sort of a guaranty that your wife will be faithful."

"My wife faithful?" resumed Adolphe, with

an air of indifference, "Oh, I shall never be uneasy as to that; in the first place, I am not of a jealous disposition. I have presented my sister Elvina to Césarine, who liked her very much and has undertaken to finish her education."

"Why, of course, you have a sister! How old is she now?"

"She is almost seventeen, and is very pleasing; after my mother's death I sent her to boarding-school; but when I am married to Césarine, my sister will live with us, that is settled."

"When is this famous marriage to take place?"

"Tomorrow, my dear fellow, at the latest."

"So soon as that?"

"And you will come to my wedding? I shall count on you."

"You invite me because you happened to meet me — thanks awfully."

"As a proof to the contrary, look at this list of persons I was going to invite today — you head it."

"That's so; well, then, I will come to your wedding. After all I am glad it takes place to-morrow, as I leave in four days. But how about my brother Gustave?"

"You will bring him with you, of course; one can never have too many dancers at a wedding. Will you come to the dinner?"

"Oh, no, a wedding feast is a family affair, and, when one knows neither the bride's nor the bride-groom's people it's rather a bore."

"Well, I won't press you, for I am of your opinion, it is not entertaining to a stranger, and then Uncle Vabeaupont, the old sailor, is not always amiable; he swears like a trooper, and his talk is seasoned with I don't know how many nautical terms; when he has the gout he is worse than ever. At four o'clock in the morning we shall have a special little supper."

"At four o'clock! that's very late. When are you going to withdraw with your wife."

"My dear fellow; it is my wife who has settled it all; I only follow her instructions."

"What! already? Come, that's doing very well; now I know that she regulated everything I see that all will go on as it should."

"Now I must leave you, I'm pressed for time, as you may imagine; I am so afraid of forgetting something, and on the occasion of one's marriage one is sure to forget something. My affianced has charged me with so many commissions. Bouquets, orange-flowers — let me see, what did she say about them?"

"That she did not want any?"

"The idea! she wants a great many, on the contrary, and that is easily understood; when a woman waits to be married until she is twenty-five she's entitled to an extra large bouquet."

"Then if a young lady marries at sixty she is entitled to a whole orange tree in a box. But, one moment! what is the address of the restaurant

where you are to hold the wedding festivities? if you want me to come I must know that."

"How stupid I am; it will be just like me to forget I am married tomorrow. My dear fellow, my wedding festival takes place at Bonvalet's, Boulevard du Temple; they have some fine rooms, where people may dine and dance very comfortably."

"At Bonvalet's, very well; at eleven o'clock my brother and I will be there."

"That is too late; Césarine has settled that otherwise. The dinner is to be at five o'clock precisely — that's the uncle's dinner time. At seven o'clock every one will change their dress, and the ball will begin at nine o'clock, because uncle wants to see the dancing and he goes to bed at midnight — do you understand?"

"Very well, but as I don't care to dance before the uncle, I shall come as late as I can. Good-by, till tomorrow."

Before going to this wedding, reader, let us become further acquainted with the person who is to become Madame Pantalon, and with her uncle, the former captain of a frigate, Hercule de Vabeaupont.

We have little to add to the portrait of the bride which has been drawn for us by her future husband. Mademoiselle Césarine was a beautiful woman, tall, but well-proportioned, rather strong, rather fat for her age, a Juno rather than a Venus.

Her features were regular, her nose aquiline and very slightly curved after the fashion of a bird's beak; her eyes were lively, bold and capable of a calm, unflinching gaze. Her hair and eyebrows were quite black, she was a very dark woman. In her manner and walk there was something masculine; however, when she chose to smile and make herself agreeable one thought her quite feminine. Mademoiselle Césarine Ducrochet had an imperious disposition, everybody must do as she wished. At bottom she was not bad, but she would not yield, even when she was in the wrong—in the first place, she never thought she was in the wrong.

Her uncle had so often repeated to her that she had more mind than anyone else, that she believed herself a genius, and she was not sensible; but in answering a malicious speech or uttering an impertinence she was never at a loss. This kind of wit is very common among women, the most stupid of them are sometimes sparkling.

Hercule de Vabeaupont was sixty-five years of age. He was a big man, thin, with strongly marked features, a piercing eye, and a voice which resembled thunder. But age and numerous wounds had quite changed him.

The captain was round-shouldered and could hardly walk, his gray hair still covered a part of his forehead, and his mustache was quite white, but his voice had hardly lost its vigor, and when his anger was roused it still had the threatening

reverberations which had made his seamen obey his commands.

The sole passions of M. Vabeaupont's life were glory and the pleasures of the table; he had been a mighty fighter, had given chase to pirates and had brought many a corsair low.

He had only left the sea, the theatre of his exploits, when vanquished by age and the gout, which now gave him no truce, and had then retired to a very fine property, a kind of small château, which he possessed at Brétigny, a little village in Picardy, in the neighborhood of Noyon.

But the old captain did not retire to his domain unaccompanied, he took with him his cabin boy, who was also his protégé and whom he loved as much as he was capable of loving anybody, and to whom he was thus attached because he had almost brought him up, and people usually become attached to those to whom they do good; it would only be right that this attachment should be reciprocated by the person benefited; however, there are nearly as many ungrateful persons as there are benefactors.

Here it was not so; a little boy, who might have been seven or eight years old, had been found on a pirate ship which the captain had captured. Who was he? whence did he come? whom were his parents? This was what they could not find out, and it made them a little uneasy. The child was pleasing and they carried it to the captain, who was then quite a young man, but who, with all his

bravery, had a weakness for children; on seeing this one, he exclaimed,—

"And who is this midget?"

"No one knows, captain, we found him in the chief pirate's room. Probably his father was killed during the combat."

"Well, we'll keep him, we'll make a man of him. Can he talk?"

"A jargon that no one understands."

"Come here, little one, what is your name?"

The child did not answer; but he began to laugh, and snatching from a sailor's hand a goblet containing a little rum, he put it to his lips and swallowed the contents without making a grimace.

This action delighted the captain; he took the little boy in his arms and jumped him on his knee.

"Devil take it! you'll be a fine fellow," said he, "the rum didn't even make you wink. Come, I shall keep you, you shall be my cabin boy. I attach you especially to my person. What is today?"

"Captain, it's carnival time and this is Lundi-Gras!"

"Really? well, there's a name all ready made. Little fellow, you shall be called 'Lundi-Gras.' Do you hear, you others? Now take Lundi-Gras away, clean him, rig him out as a cabin boy and teach him his new duties. I have an idea we shall make something of him."

This was how the captain, who was still young,

received M. Lundi-Gras, who since that time had never left his captain, whom he obeyed as the most faithful dog obeys his master. But the little cabin boy, whose face at first had been round and saucy, soon became a great, blowsy fellow, whose very frequent use of rum gave him a careless and even rather brutal expression.

Lundi-Gras became very fat, but did not grow tall, and remained a dwarfish man, which did not prevent his doing his work well and always being there to execute his captain's orders. The latter, who was very tall, when he talked to his cabin boy leaned upon him as though he were a cane. The captain placed his hand on Lundi's shoulder, and if he walked made the man walk before him, as if he held a bamboo, and the cabin boy, being used to this manœuvre, lent himself to it with equanimity.

Lundi-Gras was twenty years younger than the captain, so when the latter was obliged to say good-by to his frigate at the age of sixty, his cabin boy was only forty. But, thanks to the rum, which he frequently abused, and to the sun, which had tanned his skin, M. Lundi-Gras looked almost as old as his captain.

His corpulence added to his unpleasant appearance. As he was very fat indeed, his cheeks hung in folds, like awnings drawn up at the window; his nose, shaped like a chestnut, was almost hidden in the folds of his cheeks, and his big, stupid eyes

made him look like one of those grotesque masks which architects sometimes put on the façade of a theatre.

M. de Vabeaupont, who had not wished to be separated from his cabin boy, had taken Lundi-Gras to his little château, saying to him,—

"You shall never leave me again, you shall lead the life of a pasha here. You shall have nothing to do but eat, sleep, drink, and be always at my orders, ready to obey me at the first word; does that suit you?"

"It suits me well, captain."

"And as one has to do something to pass the time when one can no longer fight, you shall play a game with me when it suits me."

"Yes, captain."

"What games do you know?"

"Dominos, captain."

"That is something; but it is not sufficient. Can't you play cards?"

"I can play beggar-my-neighbor."

"That isn't a game. Can't you play piquet?"

"No, captain."

"I'll teach you! Every man should know how to play piquet."

"I know how to play drogue[1] and pied de bœuf.[2]"

"That's good! I'll teach you to play piquet.

---

[1] Drogue. A game of cards in vogue among soldiers; the loser has to place and keep a forked stick on his nose.

[2] A child's game.

You shall try not to get tipsy so often. And when my gout allows me we will go a-hunting."

"Yes, captain."

Everything was done as M. de Vabeaupont had planned.

They installed themselves at the château in Brétigny, a vast dwelling which had more than twenty rooms, without the servants' offices. These rooms were not all in good repair, but it was easy to restore them. The manor was something like those ancient castles which are found in such profusion in English romances. It was flanked by two towers, to which had been given the high-sounding names of the north tower and the south tower. On each of these towers there was still a culverine which must have dated from the time of King John, and which had not been used since then.

But the garden was very large, there was a piece of water, a grotto, a little lake; then a wood, which covered about three acres and might have passed for a park, adjoined the garden.

The village of Brétigny was not large, but the inhabitants were well-to-do, and poverty was unknown.

The peasants were strong and hearty, the women pleasing, the children fat; and they all had a cheerful expression which did one good to see. Only there they used cider as the ordinary drink of the country; wine was an extra. The bigwigs

of the place alone had cellars; but that mattered little to the inhabitants of the château, where the cellars were always amply replenished; for, like all gouty people, the captain was exceedingly fond of good wine.

Unfortunately, his gout had not diminished, perhaps because of the great care M. de Vabeaupont took to stock his cellar.

He had not been able to go hunting, and was obliged to content himself with playing a game of dominos with his cabin boy, to whom he endeavored to impart the principles of the game of piquet, but who could not comprehend it and could not get it into his head that quinte and quatorze made ninety-four.

The captain showed much obstinacy, however, and every evening after dinner he had a bowl of punch made and placed on the card table at which he seated himself, saying to Lundi-Gras,—

"Come, sit down there, opposite me, take the cards and try to pay attention; I have got it into my head that you shall learn piquet."

"I ask nothing better, captain."

"Then remember what I have told you. Let's see, have you discarded?"

"No, captain, I was waiting for you to order me."

"There is no need for me to order you, you ought to do it. Take your five cards."

"There you are, captain."

"Now, how many cards have you in your hand?"

"I have twelve, captain."

"Well, of all the stupid animals; I meant how many cards of your suit — of your color, have you?"

"Of my color — wait; I have seven black and five red."

"Why, bless my portholes! Can't you distinguish between diamonds and hearts, clubs and spades?"

"I meant to tell you, captain, but these ladies are dressed in the same colors and that mixed me up."

"But a heart doesn't in the least resemble a diamond."

"Oh, excuse me, it was because I had a friend who used to make flaming hearts for his sweetheart and those of the other men, and he always made his hearts like diamonds, he said that was the proper way."

"Go to the devil with your hearts and diamonds! Let's see, how many dames have you?"

"I haven't any, captain, I have always made it my duty to take pattern by you, so I remained a bachelor."

"Confound it; I was speaking of the game, how many queens have you? if you like that better."

"Oh, the queens on the cards? I have four of them."

"Well, that scores you fourteen more."

"Fourteen—the four? Never, captain; it's just as if you had four bottles of champagne in the cellar, and you told me to bring up fourteen, it would be impossible."

"What an ass! decidedly I shall never make anything of you."

The lesson ended thus.

But the time was commencing to seem long when five months after their settling at Brétigny came a little niece, aged ten, who, suddenly bereft of her parents, had come to claim the protection of the captain, her uncle.

This protection was willingly accorded, and the old seaman was delighted with his niece when he found she had all the tastes, all the likings of a boy.

The little girl immediately evinced a haughty, independent disposition, and a will which nothing could daunt. When her uncle begged her to do something which did not please her, she was not afraid to answer him,—

"No, I shan't do that."

"And why not, may I ask, mademoiselle?"

"Because I don't want to."

"But, triple portholes! if I order you to do it?"

"A thousand portholes, if you like; I shan't do it any the more for that."

Then the captain would shout with laughter, and give his niece a little tap on the cheek, as he exclaimed,—

"You ought not to wear petticoats; you are worthy to be a sailor, you have enough determination; that's right, I like it. Do as you please, learn all that you wish to know, have what masters suit you, I give you free scope. Only, learn piquet, so you may sometimes play with me, since that idiot Lundi-Gras can't get it into his head."

Mademoiselle Césarine had learned to ride on horseback, to handle weapons, to draw a bow, to skate, to swim, to jump over ditches; and at twelve years of age she could beat her uncle at piquet, draughts, backgammon and chess.

The captain was foolishly fond of his niece; he wanted her, at this early age, to be the head of his house. It was she who gave the orders to the servants; and Lundi-Gras, who obeyed her as implicitly as he did his master, sometimes made a mistake and called her "captain."

But, despite her love of gymnastics and horseback exercise, little Césarine at the age of fifteen found Brétigny too dull in the winter, and wished to go and spend a few months in Paris. The captain would have preferred to remain constantly at his estate, but he understood that he could not continue to keep a young girl, who would soon be of marriageable age, so far from society.

He hired a very handsome apartment in Paris, where they installed themselves for the winter, and the captain being wealthy, he received a great many calls and invitations in that city.

Césarine was fifteen and looked as if she were eighteen. People complimented M. de Vabeaupont on his niece, and the latter, proud of the admiration she attracted and the attentions that were showered upon her, took a taste for society and wanted her uncle to give dinners and evening parties. This was not very amusing to the captain; but his niece wished it, and so it had to be.

However, Césarine's success was not long lived; people soon saw that this damsel had not a plastic disposition. At parties, if they played some little games she would insist on those of her own choice and would not take part in any others; she was rather unamiable, and her answers were at times very impertinent.

She detested dancing, because she did not know how to dance; she did not like music, because she was unable to perform on any musical instrument. When at a party a young lady sat down to the piano, she soon showed signs of impatience; she tapped her foot on the floor, and sometimes said, loud enough to be heard, "Is she never going to finish, I've had enough of it," and other reflections which made some laugh and made others angry. For in society every one is allowed to be mischievous, but they must keep within bounds. A witty criticism is always successful, but malice without wit is ever ill-received.

When Césarine had been bored at two or three parties, she said to her uncle,—

"Let us go back to Brétigny."

This suited the uncle exactly, and they left Paris.

But these little checks to her self-esteem had taught Césarine that to live in society it was not enough that a young lady should know how to use arms and sit a horse.

At all these entertainments there was dancing, so she determined to learn to dance, and ended by liking it. Then, all young ladies who were well brought up knew something of music; she bought a piano and took lessons; but having no talent for that instrument, she only got so far as to play "Marlborough" with one hand, and renounced the piano for the hunting horn, which she soon played so effectively as to drive all the game out of the country.

Then another idea came to the young lady. She had sometimes heard men talking on serious subjects or discussing points of law. She took a fancy to become learned in such matters, to study Latin, Greek, the code, in order that she could speak on any subject like a lawyer.

For two years she assiduously read the "Gazette des Tribunaux"; but it did not make her more pleasing in society.

When Césarine was eighteen suitors began to present themselves, for they knew the damsel would have a hundred thousand francs dowry, and that, as M. de Vabeaupont's sole heiress, she would eventually be very rich.

But Césarine showed not the slightest inclination for marriage, she was not at all in a hurry to lose her liberty, and she was sustained in this feeling by two of her intimate friends, Mesdemoiselles Paolina and Olympiade, with whom she had become acquainted in society, an introduction that was followed by immediate intimacy, because there was great similarity in their way of seeing things.

Mademoiselle Paolina had a fine mind. At ten years of age she had guessed a charade in a journal; and since that time her greatest pleasure had been to study; she wrote verses and little fables, but she was expecting to write a tragedy; indeed, this was her only object and thought, but she wanted a virgin subject and had not found one as yet.

As young men had often gone so far as to laugh when they heard her verses read, she took a violent hatred for men, who could not understand her poetry, and she frequently said to Césarine,—

"Don't marry, my dear; believe me, you had better not marry. You have a fortune, you are free, your uncle lets you be your own mistress, do as you please; why should you give all that up? For a woman becomes a slave when she marries. How foolish to become a man's slave! you would quickly repent it."

Mademoiselle Olympiade, a tall girl with as much figure as a lath, to whom no one had ever paid court, also affected a great disdain for men, and was always making such speeches as this,—

"Good heavens! how ugly men are. How can anyone love such beings as those. Three-fourths of them have ugly feet and walk horribly, they dress in such a stupid fashion, and their cropped hair and hats like stove pipes or salad bowls! can they want to be the masters, forsooth! They look as if they were protecting us, but I don't want their protection. Don't you ever marry, dear Césarine; mock at these gentlemen, laugh at their sighing. But don't believe what they say, for they all lie."

Césarine, whose heart was insensitive, was quite of the same opinion as her two friends, and refused all those who aspired to her hand. The old sailor had thought this very droll at first; but when his niece had attained the age of twenty-three, he reflected that if that continued he should never live to see his niece's children, which would deprive him of an interest that would amuse and occupy his old age, and so he said one day to Césarine,—

"My dear, you have refused a good many matches; but now it is time to make an end of it; you must think of marrying."

"Why, uncle, what necessity is there of that?"

"I repeat that I wish it. Take your time to choose. I don't ask you to marry tomorrow; but now you must study those who present themselves, and when you have found a young man to your taste, come and tell me at once, that we may end the matter."

Césarine thus gained time. However, what de-

termined her to make her choice was the fact that her two intimate friends, who had abused men so much, had married.

The poetic Paolina had married M. Étoilé, a plain business man; the cantankerous Olympiade had become the wife of M. Bouchetrou, a merchant tailor, and when Césarine had evinced her astonishment that they had consented to take husbands Paolina had answered,—

"M. Étoilé wept when he listened to my verses."

And Olympiade had lowered her eyes and murmured,—

"M. Bouchetrou promised to let me dress according to my fancy."

Just at this time Adolphe Pantalon presented himself. He was not an Apollo, but he was a nice enough fellow. What pleased Césarine most about him was that he looked like a thoroughly good fellow, easy-tempered, accommodating, and she noticed that the young man did not pay any forced compliments, but simply told her he should be very much flattered if she could like him well enough to marry him. It was in the winter, and they were consequently in Paris, when Césarine said to the captain,—

"Uncle, I think I have at last found a man who will suit me and whom I consent to marry."

The old mariner started with joy in his easy chair as he exclaimed,—

"By Jove! that's fortunate, and where is this jolly fellow who's going to be my nephew?"

"Why, at home, I think. He is an advocate, he has eight thousand francs income, and he is thirty years old."

"That's all very well, so far as it goes. Eight thousand francs income is little, and you might aspire to a richer match; but if he has talent he will augment his fortune. What do you call this jolly fellow?"

"Adolphe Pantalon. Here is his card, which he begged me to give you."

"Pantalon! what a queer name. You will be Madame Pantalon. With such a name as that, if you don't wear the breeches, it will be too bad. But I am quite sure you will wear them. Then, it is decided, this young man pleases you?"

"Why, yes; I'm not in love with him, of course."

"Oh, it is not necessary to be in love with your husband."

"There's one thing I am afraid of."

"What is that?"

"I don't think that this young man has much mind."

"You can't complain of that! to marry a man who has too much mind is like playing cards with a more skilful player than yourself; you'd be sure to lose every game. Marry this Pantalon, if you think well of him. And as I wish to make his

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acquaintance I shall immediately send him an invitation to dinner for tomorrow. I'll have Lundi-Gras carry it."

The captain called his cabin boy, and said to him in confidence,—

"Carry this letter to M. Pantalon, give it only into his own hand, and say you will wait for an answer. While the young man is reading my note, you will scan him closely from head to feet, you understand? He wants to marry my niece, and I wish first to know if he is physically worthy; if he is a well-built fellow, and carries himself well — is hearty, strong, you know what I mean."

"Yes, captain, I'll pass him in review."

Lundi-Gras went to carry out his commission. Adolphe was in his study. The advocate's servant had at first said to the retired cabin boy, "Give me your letter, I'll take it to my master and bring back the answer to you."

But Lundi-Gras had answered, "No, it can't be done like that; I must give the letter to your master myself, because, while he is reading it, I must inspect him and make sure how he is built, that he isn't knock-kneed, that his shoulders are broad, that he is a strong, hearty fellow; do you understand?"

"No, I don't; most people who come to a lawyer's care little whether he's ill or well built. I'll go and tell my master."

"I'll keep the letter, I'll give it only to him."

The servant went and told the young advocate,—

"There's a man with a letter, monsieur, but he wants to inspect you while you read it."

"Well, have him come in."

"Perhaps it's a robber who wants to examine monsieur's study."

"Robbers don't come to lawyers' houses, the latter are their defenders. Let the man come in."

Lundi-Gras was introduced at length; he gave up the letter and examined Pantalon closely while the latter was mastering its contents. Then he went off very much pleased at what he had seen. He now returned to M. de Vabeaupont, having been absent for an hour.

"Captain," said he, "the gentleman, the pantaloon, accepts the invitation with much pleasure, he thanks you, sends his compliments, and gave me this little gold piece to get something to drink."

"That's very well. But what else—you know what I begged you to do, what did you notice about the young man's person?"

"I was highly satisfied with him, captain! he had a velvet waistcoat and varnished boots; as for the rest, he's all right, he's solid, his legs are not bowed, in fact he's a proper man and would have made a good sailor."

CHAPTER II

The Wedding Dinner. The Ball

Captain de Vabeaupont evidently found that Adolphe Pantalon was worthy to espouse his niece, for three weeks after the invitation carried by Lundi-Gras they celebrated the marriage of Césarine with the young advocate. The wedding festivities were held at Bonvalet's, formerly the Café Turc, and a great many people were invited. In the first place the bride, being free to do as she pleased, had bidden all her intimate friends as also several dames and damsels for whom she had a degree of liking merely because they were always of the same opinion as herself.

As a matter of course, Madame Étoilé and her husband were of the party. The poetic Paolina's husband was a man of forty with a cold expression, a man who spoke little and thought of nothing but money-making. Paolina believed that he had wept on hearing one of her elegies, but the young ladies asserted, indeed, insisted upon it, that the gentleman had had a dreadful cold in his head, and was obliged to continually make use of his handkerchief.

The reedy Olympiade was there with her spouse,

— Joseph Bouchetrou, a little man, still young, but pitted with smallpox, like a colander; which did not prevent his constantly smiling and showing himself very eager to be agreeable in society, always ready to do anything people wished, and to render the ladies a thousand little services; he was the first to push a cushion under their feet, or to help them off with their cloaks.

"But why did you marry such a pock-marked man as that?" said Césarine to her friend.

"That was really the cause of my preference, my dearest; pock-marked men have become so rare since the invention of vaccine, that those who are so have a very distinguished look, which prevents their being confounded with common faces. If this keeps on I am sure, in a few years, pock-marked men will be of priceless value."

M. Bouchetrou's claim to distinction did not rest alone on the merits of his pitted visage, for his wife, desiring that he should dress according to her taste, made him wear constantly a silly little cloak similar to that worn by jesters, and in addition to this, the little man wore his hair dressed "à la Buridan." When this gentleman went out, it was no unusual thing to see the street boys following after him, as they would after a mask.

Later came Monsieur and Madame Vespuce. Zénobie, M. Vespuce's wife, was a little woman of twenty-eight, who had been pretty, but whose beauty had already fled owing to illness and im-

prudences, such as passing the nights in dancing, and in going continually to balls and parties; she turned a deaf ear to her husband when he advised her to be more careful, and to spare her health. Tired of giving advice that was not listened to, M. Vespuce did not discover America, but he had discovered a little shirtmaker who asked nothing better than to listen to him; so M. Vespuce allowed his wife to go to balls, parties, and fêtes, while he ran, incognito, after his shirtmaker, who had no desire for dancing.

Thus does love of pleasure often lose a woman her husband's love. You say that she could easily lose it without that — perhaps, no one knows.

Madame Vespuce, who was also beginning to weary of love affairs, had for some time past thrown herself into romanticism; she read all Anne Radcliffe's old works; she affected to believe in spirits, in ghosts and in spiritualism; she wanted to be bewitched.

Following the Vespuce household came Monsieur and Madame Grassouillet. Amandine Grassouillet was a young woman of twenty-four, pretty and well-made. Her smile was gracious, her eyes lively or languorous according to circumstances; this lady knew that in order to please one must not always be the same, and as she was very desirous of pleasing, she was quite coquettish. This did not always suit her husband, who was jealous, and sometimes made scenes with his wife; but the latter

seemed to pay no attention to him, and still continued to ogle and flirt. This frequently caused M. Grassouillet to wear an ill-tempered expression, and as in addition to that he was very ugly, all the men thought themselves justified in paying court to his wife, never for a moment supposing she could feel any love for so disagreeable a husband.

Later came Armide Dutonneau, a beautiful woman who had passed her thirtieth year, but who had sworn to herself that she never would be more than thirty-three. She was a rather masculine beauty, rather common, and her complexion was getting pimply and her nose a trifle red.

Armide's husband was a jolly fellow, worthy of serving as her squire. He was almost six feet in height, plump, but not fat; his face was agreeable and expressed the good-humor which made the bulk of his disposition; this gentleman was always laughing, even when his wife scolded, for they were exactly opposite to the Grassouillets; it was madame who was jealous and monsieur who flirted.

Armide thought it very dreadful that Chou-chou, that was her husband's pet name, should be amiable and gallant with other women besides herself. She wanted to hang on her Chou-chou's arm continually. But for some time past the latter had been fluttering about, and always finding some reasons for not being at liberty when madame wanted him to take her out walking. Then Armide said, very decidedly, that men were no great things.

M. Dutonneau kept on laughing when his wife made him a jealous scene; often, too, he took that opportunity to seize his hat and go to walk about the squares, those new places embellished with trees and a verdure that one is quite surprised to find in the midst of Paris, and which are very restful after the dirty streets and the confusion of the traffic; handsome Dutonneau had a passion for these squares, there he always went to walk, and there he ogled the pretty, saucy little faces — for it must be confessed that he did so. Chou-chou gave the preference to these oases because he was certain of always meeting there some more or less pleasing little women; the young nurses in particular come there in great numbers to walk their little charges; and Chou-chou, who was not proud, did not object to cast a glance at a pleasing young person in a white apron and a simple linen cap, and murmured to himself,—

> In love, as in nature,
> Distinctions are unknown.

To all the ladies mentioned above, I must add a widow, Madame Flambart, who at forty years of age had buried three husbands. This was a tall woman, who would have been very good-looking but that her features strongly indicated a lack of gentleness and affability; her dark eyes were fine, but her glance was hard and mocking; her voice was strong, almost a baritone, and when she laughed

one heard not accents of frank gayety, but something like a fit of hollow coughing.

You are surprised, perhaps, that Césarine counted among her friends a person whose age was so far above her own; but the Widow Flambart, who had most elegant gowns, had greatly admired Césarine's dress and her rather proud carriage; she had paid the younger woman compliments on the good taste she displayed in her dress, and also on her deportment; then she had several times gone into ecstasies on hearing the captain's niece quote from some Latin author. Where is the woman who cannot be won by flattery? Everybody knows La Fontaine's fables by heart; but nobody can improve upon them.

To all the individuals I have mentioned, add some of the captain's old friends with their wives and children, big and little; these were of the bride's company. The bridegroom had far fewer people there.

Adolphe Pantalon had, in fact, no relations beside his sister, except a very deaf old aunt, some cousins and their wives, a dozen persons in all; but as there were three times as many on the bride's side, it made a very large table.

We must not forget one from whom the captain would never consent to be separated. Lundi-Gras was at the dinner, not at table, it is true; but placed behind M. de Vabeaupont's chair, where he was to remain to wait upon him. In vain had the

master of the establishment assured the captain that he would have a sufficient number of waiters to serve every one at the table promptly. The old seaman would not discuss it, he merely said,—

"I want my cabin boy behind me; if I can't have him, I'll have the wedding somewhere else."

And very naturally they had answered, "Now we know it will be agreeable to you, captain, you shall have your cabin boy behind you."

At five o'clock precisely every one was at the table, and Lundi-Gras stood behind the captain's chair, where he obstructed the waiters, because his exceedingly rotund person took up so much room; and every moment he was pushed and jostled by the waiters, who were annoyed at seeing this little wrinkled man in sailor's clothing; who looked so stupidly at them, but did not budge from the place assigned him and who smiled when the waiters contrived to poke him with their elbows.

"Go your own gait," said he, "poke me as much as you please; I am solid and I won't stir from my post."

M. de Vabeaupont had the bride on his right, and on his left Adolphe's sister Elvina, who was going on for seventeen and had just left boarding-school. She was a charming child, with a pretty, amiable, cheerful face; her great blue eyes indicated a leaning toward roguishness, but as yet she was so timid and awkward in company that she hardly dared to pronounce a word and answered

the captain in monosyllables only, when he tried to make her talk, as he did continually.

"Come, my second niece, for you are my second niece now, you must talk a little — unbridle your tongue. Are you glad your brother is married?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur."

"You mustn't call me monsieur, you must call me uncle."

"With pleasure, uncle."

"Very good! you must pledge me — drink some madeira with me."

"Oh, no, monsieur."

"By Jove! call me uncle."

"Ah, true — excuse me, uncle."

"Lundi-Gras, pour some madeira for my new niece."

"But I don't wish for any, uncle."

"Just a little — to touch glasses with me."

Lundi-Gras looked at the captain with a stupefied expression, and muttered,—

"I have no madeira, captain."

"Ask for some, idiot! people have everything they wish here; they have but to call for it."

Lundi-Gras addressed one of the waiters who passed near him,—

"Comrade, I should like some madeira."

"Comrade! do you take me for your comrade? you silly old gudgeon! Go down into the kitchen; don't you see you are in the way here?"

"I asked you for some madeira for my captain."

But the waiter went off without answering him. Lundi-Gras addressed another, who, more polite than the first, said to him,—

"Go to the office, they will give it to you — ask for the cellarman."

"Where is the cellar?"

"Go and ask that gentleman in black, down there."

The former cabin boy decided to leave his place and run after the person pointed out to him, who had just left the room. However, the captain, impatient at not being served, called out, without turning round,—

"Well, Lundi-Gras, where's the madeira?"

Nobody answered, and the old seaman turned round.

"Where's my cabin boy? Waiter! waiter! where is my cabin boy?"

"Cabin boy? what is that?"

"Oh, there you are! Lundi-Gras, where is Lundi-Gras? answer me."

The waiter to whom the captain spoke opened his eyes wide, reflected a moment, then,—

"Jingo, monsieur!" he said, "Lundi-Gras usually comes after Shrove Sunday — at least, unless they've changed all that."

"Thousand portholes! I believe the rascal's making game of me."

The captain, who was furious, had already half

risen, and Césarine had to interfere to quiet her uncle and make him understand that the waiter had no intention of making fun of him. Lundi-Gras at length reappeared with a bottle of madeira.

"Why did you leave your post?" asked his master.

"To get some madeira."

"You should have made them bring some here."

"I did ask them to, and finely they listened to me; they called me an old gudgeon."

"Flog them, and take the bottle out of their hands."

"That's enough, captain, at the first opportunity, I'll jump on them."

But Elvina refused to drink any madeira, and the captain turned to the bridegroom,—

"Pantalon," said he, "why won't your sister drink madeira?"

"She's not used to drinking wine neat, she is afraid it will make her ill; that it may stupefy her, in fact."

"Come, I see her education is incomplete, happily, your wife will have charge of it, the little sister will be in good hands."

The greater part of the ladies present did not share little Elvina's fears, and were quite willing to accept madeira.

The Widow Flambart returned to the subject.

"A woman shouldn't be afraid to touch glasses with men," said she. "They call us the weaker

sex, but it is because we have been willing they should do so; we have quite as much capability as these gentlemen; only, we are wrong in that we do not make use of it."

"Bravo!" said the captain. "Pour me some bordeaux on the strength of that, cabin boy."

Lundi-Gras, who still held his bottle of madeira, placed it on the ground as he spied a waiter who was passing with two bottles which he was about to serve to the guests, jumped on the man, and snatched one of the bottles from his hand, the waiter holding, as he did, a bottle in his other hand could not defend the one taken from him, and contented himself with saying,—

"You shall pay me for that, old sailorman."

Lundi-Gras came back quite proud, and poured out some wine for the captain, who, after sipping it, said,—

"You are an ass! this never came from Bordeaux, it's chambertin."

"Really, captain! then another time I shall taste it. Must I look for some bordeaux?"

"No, this chambertin is good, I shall stick to this."

The guests found the wines good, and did them honor; the weaker sex even, led by the example of the Widow Flambart, became delightfully merry; the men allowed themselves some of those jokes which fools think should be made to the newly married couple at a wedding feast.

They talked from one end of the table to the other, everybody speaking at once; the captain, in the excess of his satisfaction, thumped his fist on the table and shouted,—

"Good enough! a general hubbub; now, they're beginning to chatter. The husband is the only one who seems to be silent. Come, Pantalon, you are saying nothing. You must not let love deprive you of speech. One must forget love while at table. Sing us a little song. Here's the dessert now, and it's the right time for a song!"

"Why, uncle," said Césarine, "nobody sings at weddings now. Fie, it is bad form; we leave that to working people."

"My dear niece, that proves that working people amuse themselves better than we do, and I think theirs is good form and ours bad; so I'm for a song. Well, Pantalon, what do you say?"

"Captain, I am sorry to refuse you, but I have never been able to sing."

"Pardon, captain," said Madame Étoilé, half rising to obtain more attention, "but if you will allow me, I have written some verses on the occasion of my friend Césarine's marriage, and I am quite ready to recite them to you."

"Very well, fair lady; recite your verses; that won't prevent our singing afterwards. Cabin boy, pour me some chambertin."

Lundi-Gras, when his master was not noticing him, had turned and drunk directly out of the

bottle of madeira. But this time the captain had turned his head and caught his cabin boy, who had the neck of the bottle in his mouth. He pinched him hard.

"What are you doing there, rascal?"

"Excuse me, captain, I was just tasting to know if that was the wine you wanted," answered Lundi-Gras.

"And you were drinking directly out of the bottle."

"Captain, I guessed it was the madeira, which you won't want again."

"We shall have a famous score to settle between us, Master Lundi-Gras!"

"Just as it pleases you, captain," answered that worthy.

"In the meantime, pour me out some chambertin," said the captain.

The unlucky Lundi-Gras immediately proceeded in search of the other bottle, which he had carefully hidden in a snug corner. He uncorked it and began to pour some into the glass which the captain was holding out to him; but the waiter from whom he had so rudely snatched the bottle of chambertin had been watching for some moments for a chance to revenge himself on the former cabin boy. When he saw Lundi-Gras in the act of pouring for his master, he went softly up behind the old tar, gave him a vigorous kick in the rear and immediately disappeared.

The kick had been so well applied that Lundi-Gras was thrown forward and in this sudden movement he had struck with his bottle, and broken, the glass which the captain was holding to him. The wine spread over the table and Elvina and the old seaman were splashed by it. The latter was furious, he seized his plate and broke it over his cabin boy's head, shouting, —

"Get out of here! Get out of here, you pirate! don't come near me again, or I'll scuttle you."

Lundi-Gras took it all quietly, and departed rubbing his head and his back, and saying,—

"When you want anything, you can call me."

They managed, not without trouble, to quiet the captain, and Madame Étoilé, who was waiting impatiently to read her verses, rose again, saying,—

"Quiet being restored and the storm past, Poetry can dare to show herself; I will begin: To you, beautiful bride! —

You are standing on the border
'Twixt love and wedded bliss;
And for your household's order
It may not come amiss:
To let no other share your sway;
Be just and firm in all you say;
And should your husband rave and swear,
Or act, perchance, the sullen bear,—
Believe me, that, to brave the storm,
You'd better act in manly form!"

Madame Étoilé stopped and sat down again to take breath. Applause followed, particularly from

the ladies; but Chou-chou Dutonneau ventured to say,—

"I don't much like that about husbands turning to bears."

"Why not, monsieur? Why it is very true to nature," said pretty Madame Grassouillet, laughing, "one very often sees a husband who has turned to a bear!"

"Amandine, it seems to me that your remark is very untimely," said M. Grassouillet in a low tone; "as for me, I am of M. Dutonneau's opinion, I think it rather ungracious of this lady to say in her verses that we turn to bears; it seems to me she might have found numerous comparisons which would be more just and less brutal."

"Really, my dear, you are right; she might have said turn to a canary."

"I like your canary no better."

"But what would you like then? would you liked to be compared to an owl?"

"That will do, madame, please; but I know a bird to which she might have compared us."

"If you know it, tell us then, at once."

"No, it is one of the things one keeps to one's self."

The captain, who had not been highly entertained by Madame Étoilé's verses, exclaimed,—

"Now, we are going to sing a cheerful tol-de-rol-lol, a comic song."

"Pardon me, captain, but I have not finished,"

said Paolina hastily; "you have heard only the opening lines of my verses; now I shall treat of marriage in all its aspects, and in Alexandrine metre."

The poetical Paolina rose again, and on this occasion accompanied her declamation with gestures.

> Who thus imagined first, upon the earth,
> T'enchain for aye the sex that's made to please?
> Go back, I say, to Noah, back to Cain;
> Back further still, . . .

"No, no! go back no further," cried the captain striking the table. "Pardon, my dear lady, if I interrupt you, but I must confess to you that when I hear verses recited it puts me to sleep immediately; we old sea dogs know nothing of poetry. Will you not, therefore, keep your verse until supper-time, when I shall not be present, and let us now sing a cheerful refrain? Since these gentlemen won't sing, I am going to begin myself and I will give you,—

> It was in the town of Bordeaux."

"We, ladies, will leave these gentlemen to their singing," said Césarine rising. "It is time, it seems to me, that we go and change our toilets for the ball."

"Yes, yes, it is more than time," answered Madame Dutonneau rising also, "for I am very

suspicious as to the character of these gentlemen's songs."

Madame Étoilé said nothing, but she darted a disdainful glance at the men, while the Widow Flambart cried,—

"These gentlemen are delighted to see us go, they will be free to smoke, and now women are abandoned for cigars."

"How horrid!" exclaimed Madame Vespuce.

"Fortunately we all have our own little way of revenging ourselves," murmured Madame Grassouillet.

And the ladies disappeared just as M. de Vabeaupont began his song.

The ladies once gone, it was who should sing after the captain, for all these gentlemen knew some songs, but they were a little too broad to be sung before ladies.

They remained at table a long time, and it was nearly nine o'clock when they decided to leave it and repair to a drawing-room where card tables were set out.

When the captain got up, he was by no means tipsy, because he habitually drank deep, but his legs were rather shaky; he called Lundi-Gras, who on this occasion did not respond.

"Where the devil is my cabin boy?" cried the captain. "What have they done with him? I must have him, I want him. Nephew Pantalon, go, if you please, and inquire about my cabin boy."

The bridegroom hastened to obey his wife's uncle.

He returned in a short time and said to the captain,—

"My dear uncle, Lundi-Gras is not in a fit state to present himself before you. He is so tipsy he cannot stand, and is asleep in a private room where he has eaten and drunk for four. I assure you they have taken good care of him."

"Then lead me to this room. I'll go and talk to the rascal!"

"Why, captain, as he's asleep —"

"Be easy, I know how to awaken him." And the captain took Adolphe's arm and leaned on him, saying,—

"You are solid, but you are too tall; I'm so used to supporting myself on that ruffian of a Lundi-Gras, who serves as my cane; well, I walk badly when I have not my cabin boy under my hand."

They reached the room in which Lundi-Gras was snoring, stretched out on a sofa. The captain looked at his cabin boy, gave him a punch in the side, and seeing that that did not waken him, said to the bridegroom,—

"Ask one of the waiters to bring a bucket of water."

"A bucket, captain, is not a glass enough?"

"A glass! for a man who has passed his life on the sea! Tell them to bring you a bucket quite full."

Adolphe obeyed. The bucket of water was brought by the waiter from whom Lundi-Gras had snatched the bottle of chambertin, and when the captain said,—

"Throw all that water in my cabin boy's face," the waiter very skilfully executed the order, so that not a drop was wasted so far as Lundi-Gras was concerned. The expedient was successful; the cabin boy opened his eyes, saw his master before him, and sputtered,—

"Here I am! What wine do you want, captain?"

"Look you! the rascal thinks of nothing but drinking. Come, be quick and get sober, that you may serve as my cane."

The captain then went off with Adolphe, to whom he said,—

"I must pardon this boozer, because he wished to celebrate our wedding too, and because I can't do without him."

At half-past nine all the ladies reappeared in ball dress, which did not make the ugly ones pretty, but which lent distinction and elegance to the ball. Césarine looked very beautiful. She wore her bridal costume as a queen wearing her crown. If virginal timidity did not heighten her personal charms, her noble bearing forced everyone to admire her.

At eleven o'clock came the persons who had been invited to the ball only. The gathering then

became very numerous, and the scene very animated, and the gentlemen had a choice of pretty partners.

The captain walked about the ballroom leaning on his cabin boy, who was sobered by this time, and thought he ought to smile at everybody who looked at him. The captain was in the best of humors; he often spoke to the ladies, advised them to dance all they could, and to make good use of their night.

Then Lundi-Gras murmured in the captain's ear,—

"If you like, I am quite willing to dance myself."

M. de Vabeaupont contented himself with shrugging his shoulders and leaning harder on his living walking-stick.

"Hold your tongue, you big bamboo," he growled. "Wait, Lundi-Gras, you see all these little women here dancing so genteelly, they take tiny steps, they droop their heads modestly, they are very prettily shod; the men, I must confess, are not bad either, if many of them did not look as if they were walking and not taking the trouble to dance. But all that is nothing to the dances I have seen in Africa. Oh, those were lively, I can tell you; you should have seen the women leap and gambol and twist themselves, their hair floating on their shoulders, and uttering shrill cries all the time. The men were still worse; they contorted

themselves frightfully, often they took the women by the waist and threw them haphazard over their shoulders; they fell on their backs or their faces, no matter which, and no one paid any attention to those who could not get up again; it was magnificent."

"And what sort of people were these dancers?"

"Thousand portholes! why, they were negroes and negresses!"

"Oh, yes, you told me as much. If they danced like that here it would be quite risky."

"Indeed you are quite right, Lundi-Gras, it would soon spoil these ladies' pretty ball dresses."

The bride opened the ball with her husband; after which she said to him,—

"We will not dance together again to-night."

"What! not even once?"

"Impossible, I have too many invitations. And how about yourself, monsieur?"

"Oh, call me Adolphe; don't call me monsieur."

"We have plenty of time to call each other pet names. But you, my dear—"

"That's preferable; I like my dear much better than monsieur."

"Are you going to interrupt me like this whenever I wish to say something to you?"

"No, I won't do it again, dearest."

"Here, take these tablets, I have written on them the names of all the ladies whom you must ask to dance."

"Good heavens! what a quantity of names; do you want me to dance with all those?"

"Well, didn't you expect to dance? The bridegroom, that would be pretty —"

"I don't go so far as that, but I don't see the necessity of wearing myself all out."

"Ha, ha! you make me laugh! go and give your invitations!"

The husband was not delighted with the duty assigned him by his wife; he decided, however, to satisfy her, and Césarine said to Madame Flambart,—

"I've just given my husband his instructions for the ball. I want him to invite the persons I have designated to him."

"You have done well, dearest; you must put your husband on the right footing and accustom him to obey your will."

At eleven o'clock Frédéric Duvassel made his entrance into the ballroom with his young brother Gustave.

The bridegroom was delighted at his friend's appearance; he hastened to present him to his wife, during a pause in the dance. Frédéric paid the usual compliments to the bride, and presented his brother as an indefatigable dancer; as for himself, he confessed, he never danced. Young Gustave was a very handsome fellow, who still looked like a schoolboy. He was exceedingly bashful, and blushed when a lady looked at him, and lowered

his eyes very quickly under Césarine's glances, but they rested with pleasure on little Elvina, whose modest demeanor inspired him with sympathy.

The introduction completed, Césarine turned towards Madame Dutonneau and said to her,—

"How stupid of my husband to invite anyone who doesn't dance to a ball! What are we going to do with M. Duvassel? He has a mocking air which does not please me at all."

"His brother is very nice."

"A schoolboy who looks like a canary. Now there's M. Fouillac, the son of one of my uncle's old friends, he's an agreeable man, if you like; he doesn't leave the ballroom for the cardroom as so many gentlemen do."

"But he's a rather middle-aged dancer," said Madame Vespuce, "that man must be getting well on to his fiftieth year."

"Oh, you are mistaken, my dear; I am sure M. Fouillac isn't more than forty-five."

"He looks more."

"Chou-chou still looks so young, no one would suppose he was forty-five, the wretch!" said Madame Dutonneau, "He's altogether too handsome, and he's too well aware of that fact."

"You think your husband too handsome?"

"Yes, madame, because he has too many flirtations, conquests; he's ruining his health and he neglects his wife — and that is not right at my age."

M. Fouillac, with whom we have not as yet

made acquaintance, was a well-mannered man, between forty and fifty years of age. He had been good-looking enough, as to his face, though he had rather the expression of a sheep; but now he had become quite bloated, which made his small eyes look like those of a mouse.

He was a man who always had a smile upon his lips and compliments at his tongue's end; with these, a man is rarely unsuccessful in making a good impression, especially among the ladies, yet at thirty this gentleman had succeeded in nothing but in dissipating the property left him by his father.

Since that time how had he lived? That was what a great many persons asked, for he had no profession, and after essaying all kinds of things, he passed his time in doing nothing. There are a great many people in the world who are in the same case as M. Fouillac; always well-dressed, well-mannered, wearing the freshest of gloves and the most irreproachable boots, they are seen at the first representation of all the plays at the smaller theatres, at concerts, fêtes, balls, where they are careful to make themselves remarked by talking very loud.

Their lives are problematical. They live by deceiving others, say some; they must owe money to everybody, say others. Certain it is that they are spongers and parasites who study how they may flatter each one's tastes,; they are invariably of one's opinion, and if one were to say that one

were going to the moon, they would not fail to say that it was really an excellent idea.

At the time of which we are writing M. Fouillac asserted that he did business at the Bourse; he frequented it very assiduously, it is true; but it was believed that he only gambled with other people's money. M. Fouillac, who had lost his fortune by gambling, had not, however, lost the hope of one day being more fortunate; and if he did not take his place at the lansquenet or baccarat tables in his friends' drawing-rooms, it was because he had not a sou in his pocket, and also because it hurt his pride that he could not play for high stakes as he formerly used. As for that, one can understand that a man who had covered the table with bank notes did not care to take part in a game where they only hoped to win a few louis. That, however, was why M. Fouillac now contented himself in looking on at the game and not taking part in it.

"Poor fellow!" said the captain, "he is wiser now; his reverses have taught him his lesson."

This is how we often misjudge people; we do not suspect that this indifference masks a passion, and that hidden passions are the most dangerous. Beware of the bomb when it is ready to explode.

At dinner M. Fouillac ate and drank prodigiously, but that did not prevent his studying the tastes, the tempers, of the greater part of the bride's good friends. Nor in the evening did he fail to

praise Madame Étoilé's verses, compliment Madame Vespuce on her ball gown and queenly bearing, Olympiade de Bouchetrou on the air of distinction which the pock-marks imparted to her husband, and, finally, Césarine on her habit of making herself obeyed, and on the control she seemed to have over her new husband.

There remained only Madame Flambart, whom he dared not compliment on the fact that she was the widow of three husbands; but before whom he stopped every time he passed, and bowed as though he wanted to take her in his arms.

Adolphe presented his friend Frédéric to the captain, who said to the newcomer,—

"Why are you so late in joining us, monsieur?"

"Why, captain, it is not yet very late."

"Do you think not? it's half past eleven, I am going to bed soon myself. You are an old friend of Pantalon's, are you not?"

"Yes, monsieur, we were chums at college."

"You see I have given him to wife one who is well-equipped—a vessel which knows how to tack, confound it! You have seen my niece?"

"Yes, captain, I have had the honor of meeting her. She is a very beautiful woman."

"I quite agree with you. I hope Pantalon will not keep all his canvas furled beside her. As for the rest, I am perfectly easy, if he doesn't walk straight, Césarine will know how to set the pace for him. My niece is as good as a man any day, she

has all the capacity of one. I mean by that the capacity of a man of merit, of mind; as for weak-minded idiots, she would tread them under foot like kittens."

Frédéric tried to maintain his gravity as he looked at the bridegroom, who did not appear altogether delighted at the portrait which was drawn of his wife. But Madame Flambart came up, exclaiming,—

"Monsieur Adolphe, your wife saw you talking, and was afraid you might forget that you were to dance this dance with Madame Gercain, and they are about to take their places. Come, Madame Gercain is over there, on the left."

"Oh, I see her; she's ugly enough to be recognized; she's a little humpbacked too, I think. It's anything but pleasurable to dance with that lady."

"It is your wife's will; come along."

The bridegroom decided to obey, making a grimace. Madame Flambart looked at the captain and remarked,—

"He submits; oh, Césarine will make him toe the mark; from the first, I said to her, 'My dearest, from the very first day of your marriage you must put your husband on the right footing — immediately — on the right footing.'"

"Who in the world is that lady?" asked Frédéric of the captain, when the widow had departed.

"That, monsieur, is a woman who has buried three husbands!"

"Confound it! if she lost them by means of putting them on the right footing, I venture to hope your niece will not follow her counsels."

The old mariner laughed.

"Be quite easy as to that," he said, "my niece follows her own ideas, she follows nobody's counsels. Come, Lundi-Gras, we are sailing before the wind, cabin boy, it's time to tack for the shore."

"What, captain, are you going already? Why, there's a supper yet, they told me so at the office."

"I know that devilish well, seeing I ordered it, but it is for the young people who are going to dance all night, while we others, old lugger, will go to bed. It would seem strange to me, besides, if you hadn't had enough to eat and drink, without wanting anything more."

"I assure you, captain, I should have supped with great pleasure."

"Hold your tongue, old snob! Come, forward, march!"

M. de Vabeaupont and his cabin boy had left. The ball was then at its height, the dance was very lively, for the captain had done things well; punch was handed round between the dances; the gentlemen did not despise it, and Madame Flambart imitated them, saying to the ladies,—

"Mesdames, believe me, you had better drink some of this punch, it is infinitely preferable to ices and syrups, and it will prevent your giving yourselves inflammation of the lungs."

"But we shall make ourselves tipsy," suggested Madame Vespuce.

"Not a bit of it, it is only a question of accustoming one's self to it."

Among all these cheerful, jolly, animated faces, the bridegroom's was the only one which looked at all serious. His friend Frédéric observing this, rallied him.

"What is the matter with you, my dear Adolphe? for a bridegroom, I think you look rather more thoughtful than is usual."

"By Jove! my dear fellow, I can't stand any more of this; this incessant dancing is overpowering. I've never been fond of dancing; a quadrille now and then is all very well, but a whole evening of it without any rest is far from pleasurable."

"And what obliges you to do it, if you don't wish to?"

"Why, my wife; Césarine has given me tablets on which she has written the names of the persons with whom I must dance — you saw that just now; when I appear to be thinking of resting a little, she sends Madame Flambart to me, to recall me to my duties."

"Adolphe, will you allow me to advise you?"

"Speak, I am all attention."

"I was very much concerned for you when I heard M. de Vabeaupont describing his niece. If he was saying what was true, you have not married a woman, but a cuirassier."

"What an idea!"

"It pleases me to think," resumed Frédéric, "that the uncle, dear fellow! has overdrawn the portrait; still, your wife has already shown herself rather exacting. The Dame Flambart, widow of three husbands, keeps saying that your wife must put you on the right footing. The best footing for a household is gentleness, a mutual complaisance which does not say, 'I wish to be the master'; but which does not allow one to weaken when one is in the right. If you begin by doing your wife's will, she will end in looking upon you as a cipher and doing everything without consulting you."

"Don't be uneasy, I have too much strength of mind for that; if they go too far, I shall let them see."

"That's all very well, but it would be much better not to let them go too far."

"Oh, here's the introduction to the next dance, it is a waltz this time, and I don't like waltzing."

"Well, don't waltz, then."

"This is Madame Boulard's dance — an enormous woman, a regular bale, I can never support her."

"Don't waltz, say it makes you dizzy."

"But Césarine knows well that I waltz, I have waltzed with her. Ah, good! here is the aide-de-camp sent to warn me."

"Oh, yes, the widow of three husbands is advancing towards us; be on your guard."

Madame Flambart, in fact, came up to them, and addressed the husband,—

"Well, don't you hear, they've begun the waltz; it is Madame Boulard whom you are to invite. Césarine sent me to tell you. Come quickly, you've lost some bars already — but come along."

Frédéric nudged his friend and whispered to him, "Don't go." Adolphe hesitated, then he said,—

"I am very tired and Madame Boulard is a very bad waltzer."

"You will make her go all right, with a good partner a woman can always waltz."

"No, when a woman has no ear, her partner can never make her keep time."

"Why, come along, M. Pantalon, since it is your wife's wish that you should."

"No; I shall not waltz this time."

"Why, what an idea! well, I must say you are neither amiable nor gallant. Your wife will be furious."

"Oh, I think not. I should not like to think she would pout over a little thing like that."

The widow departed, very much disappointed, and went to inform Césarine of her husband's resolution. The newly married woman could not understand how any one could refuse to do anything she wished, and she said to M. Fouillac, who was beside her,—

"Monsieur Fouillac, will you go and find my

husband? he can't have understood Madame Flambart; he owes this waltz to Madame Boulard, who is awaiting him, and has refused others on his account, it would be outrageous of him to make her miss the waltz — go and tell him that."

"I'll fly to do your bidding, fair lady; and if needs be, if your husband refuses to waltz with this lady, I'll take his place myself, though I am rather a poor partner."

"You are a charming man! you always do as one wishes."

"I have no other occupation, madame."

M. Fouillac turned swaggeringly towards the bridegroom, and Césarine remarked to Madame Flambart,—

"I have quite an idea that it is this M. Duvassel, this friend of Adolphe's whom I have never seen before, who is giving him bad counsel; for never, up to the present, has Adolphe refused to do anything I asked him."

"Yes," said the widow, "he was talking in quite a low tone to your husband, and he looked delighted when M. Pantalon refused to waltz with Madame Boulard."

"Oh! well, we shall see; my husband must not imagine that he can take advice from any one but me. No, no, I shall not for a moment suffer that. This M. Duvassel, this would-be doctor, must take care how he behaves."

Meanwhile M. Fouillac had gone up to the

husband, who was still chatting with his friend Frédéric, he smiled graciously and said to him,—

"Monsieur bridegroom, I come to you as an ambassador, your charming wife has delegated her powers to me and commissions me to beg you to waltz with Madame Boulard, whom I do not know, but who has been designated to me from a distance — a little, yellow, enormously stout and very short woman with roses in her hair. I can see her from here."

"M. Fouillac, I am very sorry you have taken so much trouble, but I have already told Madame Flambart that I wish to rest a little; I am tired."

"So you don't wish to waltz with Madame Boulard?"

"No, not this time."

"Well, then, if you will allow me I will do so in your stead; I'll waltz with this lady who is awaiting you, and I'll tell her you have the cramp."

"Tell her anything you like; you are extremely obliging and I thank you for your good offices."

"I am delighted to be able to serve you; only I am not a very good waltzer. Does this lady dance well?"

"Angelically," answered Frédéric, biting his lips.

"Then she will guide me; that will do very well, but she must guide me."

And M. Fouillac went off to invite the fat dumpy woman to dance; she accepted the invitation with alacrity.

"Who is this very obliging gentleman?" inquired Frédéric of Adolphe.

"An acquaintance of the captain's — the son of one of his old comrades. You told him that lady waltzed angelically and it is quite the contrary."

"It was necessary to encourage him, since it was imperative that he should waltz with Madame Boulard."

"My dear fellow, how will he get out of it without some mishap? I shudder to think of it."

"And it's a perfect festival for me — to see them waltz. By the way, here's your wife passing, well, really, she waltzes perfectly."

"Césarine can do anything she wishes. Your brother is waltzing with my sister."

"Your sister is very pleasing; she looks as though she were very modest and gentle."

"Yes, she has an amiable disposition, she's rather timid, but she will live with us and Césarine will form her."

"Oh, my dear fellow, try not to have her formed too much, a timid woman is so pleasing!"

"Really, Frédéric, you have a bad opinion of my wife —"

"No, my dear fellow, no; only, I am doubtful of women who speak Latin. Oh, these learned women! remember Molière."

"It is not so in our time."

"I am not of your opinion; the ridiculous changes its form, but it reappears at all epochs; it is like

the passions, inherent in the human species. Look you, are there not always ambitious, egotistical, jealous, envious, avaricious people? canting hypocrites, seducers, usurers and boasters? and in fact wicked people who often do evil for the mere pleasure of doing it, and without gaining anything thereby? The latter are the more numerous, which proves that we do not come into the world with all the virtues. But look out! here are our waltzers."

M. Fouillac, who was just above middle height, found that his partner's roses were almost under his chin; he had his arms around Madame Boulard, and tried, as he turned, to raise the massive dame, who shook continually out of time and yielded her unresisting weight to her partner's arms in a manner which threatened to utterly exhaust that gentleman. In fact the perspiration was pouring from M. Fouillac in great drops, his face had become scarlet; he was obliged to hold his partner firmly and he also had to avoid the shocks of the other waltzers, against whom Madame Boulard was always ready to bump.

This painful work could not last forever. Fouillac's vanity would not allow him to desist; but he began to be dizzy, and was no longer able to avoid the other couples who were waltzing; pushed by some, jostled by others, he had the misfortune to find himself in handsome Dutonneau's way. That fine fellow, who was waltzing with a woman of his own calibre, hurled himself against the weighty

Madame Boulard and her partner with an impact that they could not resist; they both fell, the gentleman on his back, and the lady on top of him.

Fortunately, they were not at the Opéra ball, where all the waltzers would have continued to turn at the risk of passing over their bodies; at a private ball, when a similar event happens, the bandmaster makes a sign to his musicians, who cease to play immediately. So all the waltzers stopped, and hastened to pick up the fallen couple; Fouillac could not stir, because Madame Boulard's weight was upon him, and her chignon and roses, which had become detached from her head, were all over his face. Finally some of them picked up the dame, all the ladies hastened to reassure her, telling her that she had fallen gracefully, not even showing her ankles.

This assurance was but small consolation to Madame Boulard for the mortification of losing her hair; she looked at her chignon and her roses strewn on the floor, where Fouillac had dashed them angrily from his mouth. As for him, his face was scratched, for the pins which held Madame Boulard's chignon and roses had not spared her partner.

Césarine had hardly been informed of the accident when she went in search of her husband, and said to him very acidly,—

"Well, monsieur, do you know what has happened? It is your fault that Madame Boulard fell,

that her chignon came off, that she has lost a part of her hair and her roses, and that poor M. Fouillac has his face all scratched up."

"And how am I the cause of that, my dear? Am I to blame because Madame Boulard wears false hair? and because M. Fouillac fell with his partner?"

"Yes, monsieur, you are to blame; for if you had waltzed with Madame Boulard, according to your engagement, all that would not have happened."

"My engagement? You are delightful, my dearest. Why, I did not put those ladies' names on your tablets; and really you put too many."

"Very well, monsieur, that's enough. I shall remember how disobliging you were."

"But Césarine, it seems to me—"

The bride took herself off without waiting to listen further; throwing, as she went, a proud defiant glance at Duvassel, who, however, made her a very gracious obeisance.

"You made me put my foot in it finely," said the bridegroom to his friend. "Here is my wife vexed with me. I've made Madame Boulard's hair come off and lost her chignon."

"Why doesn't this M. Fouillac know how to take better care of his partner? Come, think no more of it; your wife will forget all about this in dancing, and among all these ladies I assure you I have seen a good many who were laughing at the

accident to the chignon. But here is my brother; he, at any rate, is not in a bad humor."

Young Gustave had, in fact, a radiant expression. He hurried to say to the bridegroom,—

"Oh, monsieur, how amiable, how charming your sister is; how willing she was to talk to me. She doesn't look proud and affected, like the other young ladies. Monsieur, when I return from travelling with my brother, you will permit me to come and see you, will you not?"

"Yes, of course."

"Why, Adolphe, here is my brother in love with your sister. He bursts into a flame as easily as a torch when a match is applied to it, the rascal!"

"Oh, well, later on, if he still loves Elvina —, there's no knowing —"

"Oh, yes, keep her for me, I beg of you; don't marry her to any one else — keep her for me."

"Be quite easy as to that, young man! Elvina is still too young to dream of marrying."

"Frédéric, you won't insist upon my travelling for long, I hope?"

"Leave me in peace, you young hot-head! I'll wager you will fall in love in every town in which we stop."

"No, no, monsieur, I shall never love anybody but your sister. Oh, they are playing a polka now, I'm going to dance it with her, I'm desperately fond of the polka — keep her for me, monsieur."

"Get away with you to your polka."

The ball was prolonged until four o'clock, when they sat down to supper; the ladies were glad to rest after the fatigue of so much dancing, and the gentlemen renewed their strength for the cotillon.

Adolphe endeavored to approach his wife; but the latter avoided him and did not answer him when he spoke to her.

"They are beginning well," said Frédéric to himself, glancing slyly at the bridegroom. "Ah, my poor Adolphe, you have married a very fine woman; but, frankly, I do not envy you your happiness."

CHAPTER III

Sixteen Months Later. Madame Pantalon Declares Herself

Sixteen months had elapsed since the wedding festivities at which we were present. During this time Frédéric Duvassel and his brother had been travelling in England, Italy and Germany. When they came back to Paris, young Gustave was less childish, less heedless than before his departure; but, if he had had some gallant adventures in foreign countries, he had not forgotten pretty Elvina, with whom he had fallen so much in love at Pantalon's wedding; and on reaching Paris he said to his brother,—

"You are going to see your friend Adolphe, are you not? Then you can ask his permission to take me with you—"

"Yes, yes, in a moment; let me have time to get my boots off, won't you?"

"You will inquire after his charming sister's health, won't you? She must be grown?"

"Perhaps; do you want to have her bigger?"

"No, brother, I ask for nothing but to find her as she was when I left her sixteen months ago."

"I hope, for your sake, that she has not changed;

but in sixteen months so many things may happen."

"You frighten me; what if she should no longer love me!"

"What? no longer love you? Can it be that that young timid girl told you at your first meeting that she loved you."

"Oh, no — but, you see, without saying anything, one understands so quickly sometimes. Oh, if I was mistaken I shall be so unhappy!"

"Don't talk so foolishly, you are not yet twenty-two; at that age love renders only idiots unhappy, and you are not one."

"When shall you go to see M. Pantalon?"

"Oh, don't pester me! I will go in a few days."

"Tomorrow, old fellow; tomorrow, I beseech you."

"By Jove! you are in a hurry."

"You have told me yourself, Frédéric, when anything will render us happy, we should not put it off to the next day!"

"That is correct! Désaugiers, whose songs were highly esteemed, said,—

> Today belongs to us
> And tomorrow belongs to nobody.

Come, calm yourself, terrible lover! but don't allow yourself to fall into sweet delusions. A sage — no, a philosopher, which is almost the same thing, said, 'On coming back from a long journey,

expect to find your house burned, your wife unfaithful, and your children dead!'"

"But I have neither house, children, wife, nor mistress."

"Then, all right! you can brave destiny. Those who possess nothing have one consolation, they can sleep tranquilly. But there is still love to set a hammer tapping in the heads of those who are foolish enough to make a passion of it."

"You have never been in love, have you, brother?"

"Yes, I have — but calmly, agreeably. For me love has always been a pleasure, never a grief."

"That's because you have never really been in love."

"Come, I won't tease you any more, my dear Gustave; tomorrow I will go and see the Pantalons."

"You are very kind, and you shall speak for me; you shall say that I am now very wise, very steady, in fact that I am quite good enough to marry."

"I am not too sure I ought to say that, for I don't believe a word of it. But if, in this world, people never said anything but what they believed, they would have no long conversations. It was a famous diplomat who said, 'Speech was given to man that he might disguise his thought,' and, unfortunately, the great diplomat was right."

The next day Frédéric was crossing the Place

de la Bourse to repair to his old college friend's, when in the same place where, sixteen months previously, he had met Adolphe Pantalon, he suddenly confronted that individual himself.

"Why, it is he!" cried Frédéric.

"It's you," echoed Adolphe.

"We seem to be destined to meet always at the same place."

"That's true; there are chances in life that seem like special providences. We met each other here sixteen months ago."

"You were going to be married, and I was returning from a journey, precisely as I am to-day; I arrived in Paris with Gustave yesterday evening and I was going to your place as I was sixteen months ago; only, I presume, you are not going to be married again?"

"Oh, no, once is quite enough?"

"You don't say so, my poor Adolphe! But come, let's look at you. I'm obliged to tell you that you don't look so fresh and cheerful as you used — and you are thin."

"That's a mere nothing; being fat does not make one happy."

"No, it doesn't make happiness, but it often indicates it. You look so serious, sad even, and you were formerly so jolly, so full of fun."

"My dear fellow! marriage has changed that!"

"You are not happy in your household then? Come, my dear Adolphe, take my arm, and as we

go along tell me all your troubles. You know well that I am your best, perhaps your only close friend, for they are quite as rare as faithful mistresses; and I shall be only too happy to alleviate your sorrows, if you have any."

"Oh, yes, I have them. Well, Frédéric, you were quite right; I did not marry a woman, but a cuirassier."

"Really? why, I only said that to you for a joke."

"It is far from a joke; Césarine always wants to command; at a word, the slightest observation sometimes, she gets angry, flies into a passion, and when she is angry breaks everything that comes to her hand."

"That is because she is nervous."

"She's too nervous — altogether too nervous. During the first months of our marriage she was in délicate health, and I submitted without murmuring; I said to myself, 'It is her condition which renders her thus, the effects will pass with the cause!' My wife presented me with a beautiful little girl; that was good. She put her out to nurse in Brétigny, near her uncle's château; nothing better! She goes to see her baby when the desire takes her; I find no fault with that; besides, she goes at the same time to see her uncle, who no longer comes to Paris, because he is now tied to his estate by the gout. Well, will you believe it, my friend? since her child was born my wife has

become more unamiable than ever. In the first place she has acquired the habit of criticising all I do and of wanting to meddle with my work, even with cases I have to defend. When any one comes to consult me in regard to a new case, which they wish to confide to me, if I am absent my wife sees the client; she makes him explain the business, and it has happened several times that she has sent away the person, saying, 'Your case is bad, my husband will not plead for you, I don't wish him to undertake your business, he would lose the case — take away your papers, you are in the wrong.'"

"Why, this is very amusing. Madame is a jurisconsult."

"Why, no, my dear fellow, it is not amusing at all; her standpoint is this: that, generally speaking, men do not know how to plead, that they have not enough finesse to seize on the weak part of an adversary's case, and that only women should be lawyers."

"Well, certainly their speeches would never be too short."

"Unfortunately I lost the last two causes that I pleaded, and, as you may imagine, my wife has not been sparing of her sarcasm. If she had pleaded, she asserts that my client would have won his case. That's the whole story. Lately I have been out hunting with my friends, and if I come home with an empty bag, that isn't my fault, but by Jove! Césarine's taunts are hard to bear."

"My poor Adolphe! After sixteen months' marriage — that is too soon."

"So it is in everything; madame asserts that she can understand it better than I. In fact, my dear fellow, after sixteen months of marriage, things have come to such a pass that we each have our own apartment."

"Married people of your age, that is deplorable!"

"Césarine has been and is encouraged in these ideas by her intimate friends: Mesdames Vespuce, Dutonneau, Bouchetrou, Étoilé, Grassouillet, the Widow Flambart, and a good many others besides. If you did but know how these ladies treat men. If we followed their ideas, we should submit to be their slaves, to execute their orders; they would hold the purse and give us money only when they were satisfied as to our conduct."

"It's enough to kill one with laughter."

"No, I assure you it is not at all a laughing matter, to be married to one of these viragoes. Then there's that fellow Fouillac; he flatters these ladies' ideas and they deign to admit him to their conventions — they think him worthy of their confidence."

"Because he fell when waltzing with Madame Boulard?"

"Because he still bears on his face the marks of the pins which should have held his partner's chignon on; these are noble scars, which render him charming in the eyes of the ladies."

"And you admit this gentleman to your house?"

"Good God! I have to. Césarine would make a fine rumpus if I were to put him out. For the rest, this gentleman, whom I believe to be a Gascon in character as well as by birth, is looking for nothing better than being asked to dinner where he can pay his shot in anecdotes, in which the fair sex always take the better part."

"And your sister, your pretty little sister, you have not spoken of her, is she still with you?"

"Yes, but I believe it would have been better for Elvina had she stayed at her boarding school."

"Why so?"

"Why, because in living with Césarine, in continually hearing men spoken ill of, in witnessing how my wife speaks to me, my sister is growing less docile, answers with more assurance, makes observations on what she is asked to do — in fact, because she is no longer that timid, gentle little girl that you saw at my wedding."

"The devil! and my brother is still in love with her — thinks only of her, speaks only of her!"

"Really!"

"So much so that we had barely arrived yesterday before he wanted me to come post haste to you — he was so eager to be presented."

"Bring him, my dear fellow, bring him; these ladies have not gone so far yet as to refuse to receive a pleasing young fellow."

"And can I pass under that heading?"

"Be easy; I receive these ladies' friends; there will be the devil to pay if they don't welcome mine."

"That's poor reasoning. But what you tell me about your sister makes me uneasy on poor Gustave's account. We must not let that young girl become a cuirassier, or even a little fifer."

"Oh, there is still one resource! Elvina has a naturally happy disposition, and sometimes when my wife has said something that causes me pain, if my sister perceives it, she comes quickly to kiss me, and says in a low voice, 'Don't be vexed, Adolphe, Césarine only said that so as not to yield.'"

"All the same I think it is time my brother showed himself, if he does not want your sister to turn into a masculine woman. May he present himself at your house to-morrow?"

"Of course, that is our reception day, but there's no ceremony, no dressing for the occasion — I speak of the men, for the ladies always make fine toilets, but that is their domain."

"Yes, and since it is to please us men that they like to adorn themselves, we can hardly think ill of them for it."

"Oh, my dear Frédéric, it is not always to please the men that women wish to have fine toilets, it is in the hope of eclipsing and making their best friends envious."

"Deuce take it, Adolphe; you are mighty severe on the ladies now."

"What can you expect? they have soured my

temper. You will come tomorrow evening with your brother — that's settled, is it not?"

"Yes, but don't tell your wife that I am coming beforehand; I have an idea that she will not be very pleased to see me."

"And you are not wrong, my poor Frédéric," resumed Adolphe, "to think that Césarine doesn't look favorably on you."

"What is the reason of this antipathy?"

"Why, my dear fellow, she suspects you of having advised me not to waltz with Madame Boulard, and, by a peculiar course of reasoning, of being the cause of that lady's losing her chignon, and of the scratches on M. Fouillac's cheek."

"Devil take it! I shall have enough to do to hold my own, then. But at any rate I am a physician, and perhaps if I can cure some of these ladies of the headache that may obtain me their pardon. Does your wife have headaches?"

"I believe not."

"That's a pity; but she may, later on."

There was a numerous gathering at the house of the lawyer Pantalon. Césarine's intimate friends rarely failed to put in an appearance at these evening parties, where they related to each other the offences which their husbands had committed; sometimes it was not offences, but the incurable foolishness of these gentlemen, of which they complained.

The result of these mutual confidences, these

conferences, was ever the same; Césarine would say,—

"We must change all this! the laws are badly made, the places ill-occupied, the professions carried on very indifferently. The parts are, in fact, distributed in a very absurd manner. Men have taken to themselves all the honorable employments, everything that wins a recompense, renown, or favor — all is for them. We are cast into the shade, as though we were competent only to care for children, or busy ourselves with finery. It is a shame! these gentlemen have done us a great injury! We are all quite as capable as are they of filling clerkships in the government and municipal offices, or in a business or bank, for I can reckon like Barême himself.

"When I said as capable, I made a mistake; I should have said, more capable. We have a hundred times more finesse in our little fingers than they have in their whole bodies. Can we not, if we wish, be advocates, doctors, judges, poets, authors, novelists? In these last professions women have already shown what they can do.

"Do they doubt our courage, our adroitness? Why, see how the bold riders at l'Hippodrome govern their horses and guide a chariot on its career, and tell me if all your horsemen in the Bois-de-Boulogne are capable of doing as they do?

"If it is a question of going to war, fighting the enemy, do they think that we do not know how

to handle a sabre, a sword, or fire a pistol? I repeat, women were made to be successful at everything. Need I quote those women whose names will ever be illustrious. I don't speak of Joan of Arc, because she was a glorious being set apart; but the great Catherine of Russia, Elizabeth of England, Margaret of Anjou, Marie-Thérèse, and many others, have they not proved that women ought to command, since they can wear a crown so nobly?"

While Césarine stopped to take breath, the Widow Flambart exclaimed,—

"Yes, man's reign has lasted long enough; the masculine must give way to the feminine. I have had three husbands, and I know how to guide these gentlemen. My husbands are dead, they died on my hands, but that was not my fault; if they had lived they would have been model husbands."

While the ladies were talking thus among themselves, the men were conversing on business, the stage, politics, or playing whist with some dowagers who had not yet broken off all intercourse with the masculine sex, and were quite willing to take part in that game.

But M. Fouillac was always to be found hovering near the camp of the reformers; he approved their plans, applauded their speeches, and often said,—

"I am of your opinion, mesdames, men are good for nothing but money-making."

"To spend it later on with gay women," replied Madame Dutonneau, "and to walk about the squares with them!"

When Frédéric and his brother made their entrance into the drawing-room, things were going on as we have described. When the servant announced, "Messieurs Duvassel!" Césarine raised her head, the name had struck her, although it was a long time since she had heard those who bore it spoken of. But her glance being directed towards the persons who were coming in, she immediately recognized Frédéric, and said to her friends,—

"This is the gentleman who, at my wedding ball, advised my husband not to waltz with Madame Boulard."

The ladies all made a movement of repulsion, as though they saw Beelzebub appear; and fat Madame Boulard immediately put her hand up to her chignon, to make sure that it had not again dropped off.

"What is this gentleman's occupation?" inquired Paolina.

"He is a doctor, or at least, gives himself out for such. He's addicted to travelling, this doctor."

"Then when does he attend his patients?"

"He doesn't attend them."

"Which is perhaps fortunate for them. A doctor who is always travelling, what a curious anomaly: you are attacked by a grave malady; you send immediately for your physician, you send

word for him to come and see you as quickly as possible, and they answer, 'The doctor is now at Constantinople; but be easy, directly he returns, I will send him to you.'"

"That is a doctor 'in partibus.'"

Frédéric hastened to pay his respects to the mistress of the house. Césarine's welcome was polite but cold.

"You will hardly recognize me, madame, for I have as yet had the pleasure of meeting you but once."

"Pardon me, monsieur, I remember you perfectly; you were at my wedding ball."

"Yes, madame."

"And you had a conversation with my husband, which was very interesting, no doubt, for he would not interrupt it to dance with a lady who was expecting him."

"Adolphe is one of my best friends, madame, I had just returned from a journey at that time, and, after being separated for a long time, two college friends have always a great deal to say. Besides, I think I remember that Adolphe was imparting his happiness to me — he was showing me his wife."

Césarine could not forbear a smile. She said to her friends,—

"He is not devoid of wit."

"He is all the more dangerous, then," said Madame Étoilé.

"In regard to that quality," said Olympiade, "my husband is not at all dangerous."

"Dutonneau could be as witty as possible if he pleased," sighed the magnificent Armide, "but he doesn't make use of his wit with me; he keeps it to entertain his mistresses."

"All witty men are wicked," added Paolina.

"I am not of your opinion, my dear," rejoined Césarine. "Long live wit! 'emollit mores!'"

"Oh, if you speak Latin you are always right, of course; we do not understand it."

After greeting Césarine, Gustave looked around for Elvina; but he could hardly recognize her, for the timid little girl had disappeared, and was replaced by a tall, slender young lady, whose manner was not so shy, nor were her beautiful eyes lowered as soon as any one spoke to her.

However, her eyes had still the charm that had attracted Gustave, he recognized them, and hastened to go and sit near her. Gustave could not forbear saying to her,—

"By Jove! mademoiselle, I must ask you to pardon me for not recognizing you at first — but you are so changed."

"So you find me changed since my brother's wedding? But, remember, monsieur, that was sixteen months ago, and people may change a good deal in that time, especially at seventeen. Now I am nearly eighteen and a half, I am no longer a child, I am learning to ride a horse."

"Oh, you are learning?—"

"Yes, my sister takes me to the riding school."

"But you were always charming, mademoiselle; if you are changed, it is for the better."

"I have grown a good deal."

"Your height is perfection, and if eyes could grow, I should think that yours had done so."

"But you also have changed, monsieur."

"Do you think so, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, you are brown — and then —"

"Well, and then?"

"You have a little mustache; it seems to me, you did not have one sixteen months ago."

"That is true, mademoiselle."

"Mustaches look very nice, you did well to let yours grow."

Gustave thought this remark very singular from a young girl; but, nevertheless, he continued,—

"Mademoiselle, if my person is changed, my heart is not. I have sweet memories of that wedding, that ball, where I had the pleasure of dancing with you, they have never left me, but have remained in my heart with the image of — you can imagine whom, can you not, mademoiselle?"

Young Elvina blushed, she had not yet learned to laugh at a declaration of love; besides, Gustave's eyes were so eloquent, his voice was so tender, he seemed to feel what he said so deeply, that the heart of the young girl beat faster, she was quite moved and stammered,—

"Why, no, monsieur, I can't imagine whom — why do you want me to guess?"

"That image was yours, mademoiselle!"

"Mine! why, the idea! you thought of me for sixteen months?"

"When once one loves any one, mademoiselle, does he not think of her always?"

"Why, I don't know anything about it, monsieur; you are telling me things I never heard before."

"I am telling you what I feel — you believe me, don't you, mademoiselle?"

"Oh, no, monsieur; in the first place, my sister Césarine has warned me that I must never believe what the men tell me; she assures me that you are all untruthful."

"Your sister wrongs us greatly; she must have been joking to tell you that."

"No, she spoke quite seriously."

"Does she not wish you to have a husband some day, mademoiselle?"

"A husband — yes, perhaps; but on condition that he shall be my slave!"

"Well, then, charming Elvina, it would make me very happy to be yours — let me hope you will choose me for your slave!"

"Oh, monsieur, I said slave; but I really think that my sister-in-law wanted to frighten me by drawing a picture of marriage that would give me no desire to dream of it. She herself is not happy.

Why, I don't know. It seems to me my brother is not unkind, and I am certain he loves his wife. Love, therefore, does not suffice to make a household happy."

"It does not suffice when it exists only on one side; but when two hearts understand each other well, when a married couple have perfect confidence in each other, when their glances are always meeting to melt into a smile, and their hands to clasp tenderly — do you not think, mademoiselle, that in such a union is the truest, sweetest felicity?"

Adolphe's sister hesitated, to think what she should answer — but Césarine, who thought she had talked too long with Frédéric's brother, called her and told her to go to the piano, because some of the ladies wanted to hear her sing.

"Oh, yes," cried the Widow Flambart, "sing us 'la Femme au barbe'!"

All the men began to laugh, and Elvina answered,—

"I do not know that song, madame."

"So much the worse! I shall learn it, and one of these evenings I'll sing it for you."

While the music was going on, Adolphe took his friend into a corner and said to him,—

"Well, and how did my wife receive you?"

"Well enough, although she hasn't forgotten that I prevented you from waltzing with Madame Boulard."

"Ah, she has an astonishing memory!"

"And then it quite seemed to me that all these ladies who surround your wife made grimaces at me."

"They do that to nearly all the men. M. Fouillac is the only one entirely in their good graces, because he endorses all the evil they say of the men."

"Why, he's a traitor, is this gentleman."

"What he says to these ladies is sometimes so ridiculous that I am tempted to think he is laughing at them, or that he wishes to be Madame Flambart's fourth husband."

"Have all the ladies who come to your house sworn to hate the men? It is that, to speak frankly, which deprives your reunions of a great part of their charm."

"Oh, no, thanks to heaven! the foolish ideas that disturb my wife's mind, and those of her intimate friends, are not shared by all the ladies who frequent my house. Wait! you see that pretty fair woman, over there to the left, who is smiling at what that tall young man standing near her is saying, she does not belong to the camp of the Independents."

"And who are the Independents?"

"Those ladies who rebel against being called the helpmates of man, who wish to change everything in the social sphere, and who wish to fill the employments which up to the present have been occupied by our sex. My wife glories in being one of the warmest of the Independents."

"By Jove! where shall we be next? If all the women wish to wear the breeches, we shall be obliged to put on the petticoats, I suppose."

"They would be delighted at that. This desire to command is the old story of the fairy Urgele."

"Poor women! they don't understand that their sway is far more absolute with flowing skirt and tiny waist, than it is when they assume the tone and manners of men. In copying the masculine sex they lose all their advantages. But here is my brother; he has been talking with your sister, and, it seems to me, he doesn't look half so happy as when he came here."

Gustave came up to the two friends, he smiled at Adolphe, but his smile was not frank, it was easily seen that some contrary thought lurked in his mind.

"Well, future brother-in-law!" said Adolphe, laughing; "you've been talking with my sister; absence has not lessened your admiration for her."

"Oh, no, monsieur; Mademoiselle Elvina is still charming — still amiable — only —"

"Ah, there is an 'only,' I was sure of it!" cried Frédéric; "I recognized it before you drew near."

"Why, my dear brother, do let me finish; I wanted to say that Mademoiselle Elvina is not so timid, so — what shall I call it — so ingenuous as she used to be. They have given her singular ideas about men; they've told her she must never believe them, that they lie incessantly —"

"Confound it! my wife must have told her that!"

"Later on, when I was declaring how very happy it would make me to be her husband — she answered that a husband should be nothing but a slave."

"Enough, enough, Gustave: they have spoiled your young girl, who was so sweet, so altogether pleasing, sixteen months ago. That doesn't suit me at all — a husband should be nothing more than a slave; those are charming ideas to put into the head of a young woman, I shall not allow you to marry a girl imbued with those views."

"It was but a joke, Frédéric; I am quite sure Mademoiselle Elvina only said that to make me laugh."

"No, no, it was not to make you laugh — this young girl has acquired all her sister-in-law's ideas, and in marrying she wants to see them realized; ask Adolphe if he has reason to laugh with his wife."

"No, indeed," answered Adolphe, heaving a deep sigh. "We no longer laugh, nor is our household a cheerful one; I hope you will never have one like it."

"M. Pantalon, your sister is still young — she repeats what she hears; but it will be easy to lead her to think more reasonably."

"She must change devilishly before I shall let you marry her! We have Adolphe's household

before our eyes and it ought to serve as an example to us. After sixteen months of a marriage, where the parties have everything to make them happy, here is a couple who live like cat and dog. Some cats, indeed, live very peaceably with dogs; while here is a husband who is treated like a Turk, to whom they spare no unkind remarks, all because he was too good, too obliging, too foolish, for that is the right word — in the early days of his marriage. And you wish to marry a young girl in whom they have inculcated the same ideas. No, my dear brother, that can never be. The damsel will desert the camp of these ladies or you will never marry her."

Gustave breathed not a word, but he took a position near the piano, whence he could look at Elvina. As to Frédéric, he repaired to the card room, not caring to encounter the looks of the independents.

After passing a couple of hours at Adolphe Pantalon's the two brothers withdrew; Gustave quite saddened by the change which had been wrought in Elvina's manners and speech, and Frédéric deeply grieved at seeing his friend so unhappy in his household.

CHAPTER IV

CHOU-CHOU'S ESCAPADES. A SERIOUS RE: TION

DURING the next few weeks Frédéric conti to frequent the gatherings which took place Thursday at his friend Pantalon's. Césari ceived the two brothers very coldly; but Fré who was determined to continue to see his ol lege friend and observe the interior of his h hold, affected not to notice the frigidity with Madame Pantalon greeted him, and was d amiable and polite to that lady, which Césarine fume secretly, for she wished to de her husband's friend of all desire of conti his visits.

Gustave still tried to talk with Elvina, b rarely found an opportunity; Madame Par was not pleased to have the young man cou sister-in-law, and took great pains to prevei latter from talking for long at a time with Gu As soon as she saw Frédéric's brother seat self beside Elvina, she found a pretext to rupt their conversation. She called the youn and sent her to the piano, or told her that her friends wanted her for something.

Elvina seemed sometimes to regret leaving the young man so quickly; for he looked so tenderly at her, and was constantly telling her that he adored her; but she obeyed her sister, who had obtained so great a dominion over her mind; when by any chance she had stayed over long beside Gustave, Césarine never failed to say to her,—

"My darling, it is very unconventional to talk as you do with young Duvassel; you are foolish enough to place faith in the silly nonsense he tells you. That does you no honor. All these ladies are laughing at you, and he will do the same. In the first place, he is in a very bad school; his brother, the so-called physician, gives him very bad counsel. It was he who at my wedding ball advised my husband not to waltz with that poor Madame Boulard; and you know the result of that. These men who meddle and interfere in their friends' households are plagues who should be banished from society."

Césarine's temper became so haughty, so cantankerous, towards her husband that the latter was beginning to feel that he could no longer stand his wife's imperious manners.

He spoke to her in an authoritative manner, and then there were scenes, quarrels; bitter words were addressed by madame to her husband, which could not but embitter the latter and drive away all hope of reconciliation between the married couple.

An incident which happened aggravated the situation. Adolphe lost an important case which he had flattered himself he should win. Instead of consoling her husband for an event which, after all, must be common enough in the profession of an advocate, and need not militate against his success, Césarine hastened in search of Adolphe and said to him in a mocking tone,—

"Well, monsieur, you have lost your case — the one you were so sure of winning!"

"Yes, madame, I should have won it, for my side was the righteous one. My client was an honest man, while his adversary is a thief. But, unfortunately, dishonest men are accustomed to have lawsuits, they are acquainted with all the resources of chicanery. They bestir themselves in looking for and finding a means of obscuring a way that should be quite plain. An honest man, on the contrary, sure of his own right, rests tranquil as to the result, takes no steps, and awaits the issue, which he does not for a moment suppose can be unfavorable to him — but 'errare humanum est' — it was the thief who won!"

"The thief won because his adversary's advocate did not know how to defend his client's case. As for that, you are so well used now to losing the cases that are confided to you, that you should not be surprised at having lost this one."

"Not only am I surprised at it, madame, but I am deeply grieved."

"What nonsense, since to lose them is the best you can do."

"Madame, when I am called, professionally, to defend a robber, to palliate guilt, I do not blame myself nor grieve in the slightest if I lose my case; on the contrary, I sometimes congratulate myself."

"That is a nice thing for an advocate to do — to congratulate himself when he has lost his case. Oh, that's a very good joke, that is. Lundi-Gras could not reason better."

"I do not know how Lundi-Gras reasons, madame; but as for you, you know nothing — except how to say disagreeable things."

"I have not said enough of them yet, monsieur; you must understand that I am ashamed of being the wife of such an unsuccessful lawyer. Let me plead in your place, and you will see how much better I should do."

"No, madame, I certainly shall not let you plead in my place, and if you are ashamed of being my wife, be so no longer. Let us separate."

"You think, perhaps, you will plunge me into despair by talking about a separation; but I have been thinking of it for a long time. Yes, monsieur, yes, we will separate, and I shall keep my daughter, because a girl should be brought up by her mother. If she were a boy I would willingly leave him with you; but my daughter I shall keep."

Adolphe did not answer; he had experienced a deep pang of grief on hearing his daughter men-

tioned; and he said to himself that, for his child's sake, he should, perhaps, have had more patience; is there a sadder position than that of a child who cannot receive the kisses of both father and mother? He left Césarine without saying another word.

Some time passed, the couple did not speak. Césarine made a pretence of avoiding her husband's presence; and when young Elvina asked her why she was estranged from Adolphe, she only answered,—

"My dear, I probably have reasons for acting thus toward your brother. I have plans which I am presently going to act upon, to put into execution. I am thinking of the emancipation of woman."

"The emancipation?"

"Yes, that woman may recover her civil and political rights."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"There is no need that you should understand. Allow yourself to be guided by me, and you will find everything as it should be."

Nothing further was said, but this apparent calm was but the precursor of the tempest. The storm was secretly brewing in the households of these ladies who wanted to be Independents. It was to Césarine that they came to tell their tales of woe, and she listened with joy to these confidences because she saw the realization of her plans approaching.

So, during the daytime, these ladies came to Césarine to complain of their husbands.

Madame Étoilé came with compressed lips and spite in her eyes; she came into Madame Pantalon's, exclaiming,—

"It is unbelievable; really, it is incredible."

"What is it now, my dear?" asked Césarine, making Madame Étoilé sit down on a sofa. "You seem very much irritated."

"You shall see if I have not reason to be so; I knew very well that my husband was not an eagle — in the first place one rarely finds an eagle among these gentlemen."

"A 'rara avis'!"

"Ah, my dear, I am a poet, but I never studied Latin; I look upon that dead language as an amplification of vocabulary very useless for literary women."

"Come, go on with what you were about to say."

"I was saying that my husband is by no means an eagle; but I did not believe him to be a buzzard. Well, he is — a buzzard of the very worst kind, too. You know, I have just finished a poem on the differences that exist between a man and a hare; and, as you may imagine, all the advantages are on the side of the hare. It is pleasing, it has an aroma, I was careful about that, I put my whole heart into it. I dare believe that it was perfectly successful; as for that, you can judge of it, for I will read it to you one of these evenings."

"Well, go on."

"I was good enough to wish to give M. Étoilé the first sight of this piece; I read him my poem, but I had only got through half of it when this Welshman — this Hottentot — rose and said to me, 'What stupid stuff are you reading to me? Thanks! I've had enough of it!' and he went out."

"That was not polite!"

"You mean that it was the height of impertinence. I cannot live with a man who doesn't understand poetry. I have warned M. Étoilé that I shall leave him."

"You have quite resolved on it?"

"Altogether."

"Very well, we will all go together, we will establish the tribe of Independents."

"Bravo! bravissima! the Independents. That name is delightful, it savors of romance, of the melodrama. They will write a play on us. I believe there was formerly a drama entitled: 'Robert, the Brigand Chief,' which had an immense success; but that was in the time of the First Republic; we can none of us have seen that. I am quite surprised that the piece has not been resuscitated in our day. I have the letter press, which is very rare."

"Tell me, if you please, dear lady, what connection you find between us and 'Robert the Brigand Chief?'"

"Why, Robert did not believe in being the chief

of the brigands, he called his men the 'Independents.' They were redressers of wrongs, a kind of free-justices."

"Why don't you say at once illuminants?"

"Illuminants, now there is a pretty name; what if, instead of Independents, we call ourselves illuminants? What do you think of it? That would please me more than I can say. I am an illuminant."

"No, that would border on the jocular, the gentlemen would be capable of calling after us, 'The Lanterns! the Lanterns!' Believe me, we had better content ourselves with the name 'Independents.'"

After Madame Étoilé came Madame Bouchetrou, who was furious because her husband would not don his little jester's mantle, and asserted that he should wear only clothes of the latest fashion.

"He's becoming quite foppish, is he not?" said Césarine.

"Outrageously so. You know how pock-marked he is."

"Oh, yes."

"Well, would you believe it? he wants to get vaccinated now."

"Good heavens! what for?"

"Somebody has told him that if he had the smallpox a second time, it would cause the first pock-marks to disappear."

"And he believed that?"

"Yes, mesdames, and he's going to be vaccinated, and to dress like a gay young spark. I said to him, 'Bouchetrou, if you do so I'll leave you'; and do you know what he answered?—'That's of no consequence to me!'"

"Why, on the part of a man pock-marked as he is, that was shameful."

The enormously large Madame Dutonneau was not long in arriving to mingle her wails with those of her friends. She came in out of breath, suffocating, and sank into a chair which creaked under her weight; it was some time before she could speak. Césarine brought her a glass of water, which she drank at a gulp. At length she was able to express herself.

"Madame, my husband is a monster! a scoundrel! an infamous wretch!"

"That is nothing new! you've told us so before, dearest."

"Yes, but what I have not told you is that now I have discovered his intrigues, he's a regular Sardanapalus—he has a mistress! he has two mistresses! he has three mistresses!"

"So many as that? That's going it pretty strong!"

"You may judge from that, if I ought not to feel disconsolate. Lately, finding that Chou-chou's absences were becoming longer and more frequent, I pretended to be indisposed; he went out, and I followed him. He had told me he was going to

play a game of dominos at the Café de la Rotonde. I will make a clean breast of it. He reached the Boulevard Sébastopol— that was not the way to the Palais-Royal. I said to myself, 'He's not going to look for the double-six down there, I'll wager that he is going to some one of the squares.' Sure enough, he stopped at the Square des Arts-et-Métiers, it's the meeting place of all the maid-servants in the neighborhood. I said to myself, 'Will Chou-chou do anything so derogatory as to flirt with a dishcloth, he who is always redolent of perfume.'"

"But no, it was a grisette who came, for there are some of them still — these cursed grisettes! Although it is asserted that the race has disappeared with that of pug dogs. It is not true; there are no more pug dogs, but there are, and there always will be, embroideresses, burnishers, flower-makers, illuminators, shirtmakers, vestmakers, churners, shoebinders, staymaker's apprentices, underwear-makers and milliners. Surely you would not put all these damsels in the category of fast women? and how would you name them, if they are not grisettes?"

"Why, work-women."

"Yes, those who stay closely at their work; but those who want to amuse themselves, go to the theatre, to the restaurants and dance at the Closerie des Lilas —"

'Come, drop the grisettes, and come back to your husband."

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"I am coming to him—the monster! The grisette came straight to Chou-chou," continued Madame Dutonneau, "she was a tow-headed blonde with one of those meaningless faces, fresh-colored, perhaps, but not so much as me; in short, the beauty of youth. Would you believe that this jade went right up to my husband, deliberately took his arm, smiled at him, and welcomed him by making a saucy grimace? You may imagine what I felt at that moment."

"You pounced on your husband and tore the girl from his arm."

"That was what I was going to do, when I was prevented by something I had not foreseen."

"Your foot caught? you slipped?"

"In the first place, I never slip, but I could not pounce on Chou-chou because I was separated from him by a basin filled with water. You know those basins they have in that square. I was about to go round this obstacle when I saw another grisette, a dark one this time, with a bright sparkling face and a bold expression, she went up to the group I was watching, they smiled at her and shook hands with her, and she took my husband's other arm."

"That made one on each arm."

"I was suffocating, I knew not what I was doing. In my anger I no longer saw the basin of water that separated me from Chou-chou and I think I was about to cross it as if it were a grass-plot. But a new surprise awaited me, a third grisette went

towards the infamous trio; the last one was a pale woman with chestnut hair verging towards red and with half-open eyes like an expiring carp. She smiled at that scoundrel of a Chou-chou — "

"She could not take his arm, since they were both engaged."

"That was just what I said to myself, and I was curious to see what she was going to do. But it seemed that these impudent minxes were acquainted, for the newcomer immediately took the fair one's arm, and they went off, all four of them in a row."

"What did you do then?"

"I followed the quartette; I said to myself, 'Let's see what my Joconde is going to do with his conquests.'"

"He was taking them to the theatre?"

"Not a bit of it; that would have been too tame. He took them to a restaurant, yes, I saw them, all four, go into a restaurant in the Rue Saint-Martin and stop in a room on the ground-floor. It is scandalous!"

"Pardon me, Madame Dutonneau," said Césarine, "I don't say this to excuse your husband, but it seems to me that a party of pleasure with three ladies is less criminal than a meeting with one alone."

"Less criminal—when he takes three grisettes to a restaurant. Why, just think of all they would eat, the hussies! These women devour everything

before them, and they must have omelettes soufflées and champagne. That's where our money goes. As for me, he thinks I'm a gourmand if I only ask for eel à la Tartare. You can imagine that I did not wish to compromise myself with these damsels, I should have been called all sorts of names; so I went back home, and there awaited the return of the culprit. I told him what I had seen, and I finished by avowing that I had decided to separate from him, that I could live no longer with a man who passed all his time in the squares, and who could be met with three women on his arms — three women whom he was taking to dinner in a restaurant."

"Very good!"

"And the rascal answered, 'Don't be alarmed, I shan't run after you.'"

After Madame Dutonneau came Madame Vespuce, Madame Grassouillet and many others who shared Césarine's ideas, and who wished to free themselves from all obedience to the will of their husbands and to occupy the same positions in the world as those now held by men.

Madame Boulard took part in the conferences of the Independents; since she had lost her chignon in waltzing, she asserted that all the men ought to have their heads shaved and wear only a little pigtail like the Chinese.

And lastly the Widow Flambart was no less ardent in demanding a reform in the customs of

society; where, she asserted, women ought to govern, keep the cash-box and make the laws.

When Madame Pantalon was sure of having a great number of allies, she thus addressed them,—

"Have you quite decided to second my efforts; to work for the emancipation of woman, to place her, in fact, on the same level as man — until such time as we can place her above that level?"

All the ladies answered, with a unanimity which is exceedingly rare,—

"Yes, yes, we have quite decided to cast in our lots with you."

"Do you recognize me as the head of this enterprise?"

"Most assuredly."

"You will obey me as such?"

"That is a matter of course."

"You swear it?"

"Is it really necessary to swear?"

"Well, scarcely, for I have noticed that in society an oath binds one to nothing."

"Then we won't swear."

"That is the surer way, you will be bound only by your will, which ought to be much stronger than any oath."

"It is an initiatory reform," cried Madame Flambart, "and we declare that henceforth no one shall swear, either in business or elsewhere."

"That being settled, mesdames; listen attentively to me."

"We are all ears."

"Make your preparations as though you were going on a long journey, bring all your gowns, all your jewelry, bring money, if you have it, those who have none must do without it; I shall take you to a place where you will have no need to spend any."

"And where, pray, is this fortunate spot?"

"Why, in Brétigny, to be sure; at my uncle's, the captain's château."

"And he will be quite willing to receive us, to entertain us all?"

"He will be delighted to do so. I wrote to him, to inform him of my intentions, my plans; this is what M. de Vabeaupont answers. You are listening, are you not?"

"Certainly, we are."

"I see Madame Vespuce over there, talking with Madame Grassouillet. When I am speaking I do not wish any one to talk."

"Good heavens! my dear lady," said Madame Vespuce, "I was only asking Madame Grassouillet if she knew where Brétigny is situated."

"And I answered Madame Vespuce that I knew no more than she."

"Mesdames, you should have asked me that question — I should have told you that Brétigny is in Picardy, a few leagues from Noyon."

"And is Noyon far from Paris?"

"Somewhere about twenty-six leagues. It is an

old, historic town, and was for some time the capital of Charlemagne's empire; that monarch was crowned there in 887. The Normans took it, and pillaged it. It has been burned six times, and it was there that Francis I concluded a treaty of peace with Charles XV in 1516. Later on —"

"Enough of history!"

"Yes, we want to hear the captain's letter."

"Then don't interrupt me again, and I will read it."

My Dear Niece.— You tell me you have formed great plans, that you wish your sex to take all the places which the men have thought fit to limit to themselves, and you ask that you may come, with your friends who wish to second your enterprise, to establish yourselves with me at Brétigny.

By all the powers, my dear, you could not offer me a greater pleasure. I'm as doleful as an old dismasted ship, here in my château, where I am nailed by the gout, and no one with whom to associate but Lundi-Gras, who can't learn piquet and who cheats me at dominos.

Come, with your friends; if there were a battalion of you, I should be able to lodge and entertain and feed you well. I have weapons and powder also; you can hunt, run about the mountains and woods, and forage the country; the more you play the devil, the better I shall like it; for it will remind me of my own young days. Come, Césarine, fire from starboard and larboard! Come as soon as possible with your recruits. I shall expect you.

"Well, ladies, what do you say to this letter?"

"It is as warm as one could wish."

"It has some vim."

"It proves that you will be well received."

"Then, it is settled that we go to Brétigny?"

"When shall we start?"

"I cannot give you the exact date, but it will be an early one. I am only waiting an occasion for telling M. Pantalon that there is an incompatibility of temper between us and that we can no longer live together. I already feel assured that he will not put the slightest obstacle in the way of our separation. So I warn you to hold yourselves in readiness; it is all I ask of you."

"And what about your young sister-in-law?"

"Elvina? She goes with us, as a matter of course. She shares our ideas; but I have said nothing to her as yet of our approaching departure for Brétigny, because at her age one does not always know how to keep a secret."

"And can we receive M. Fouillac at Brétigny?"

"I think we may receive him there. M. Fouillac is quite devoted to us; he is the first to encourage us in our plans for the emancipation of our sex."

"Yes, and then he may be useful to us when we need something from Paris."

"That is so; we'll make him our messenger."

The ladies then separated.

Elvina was well aware that conferences were taking place in her sister-in-law's room, and that she was not invited to take part in them; but she dared not ask Césarine what she was plotting with her intimate friends.

The young girl's heart was agitated by various

emotions; and although she repeated to herself that she should not think of Gustave, that she must not believe a word he said, that men sought only to betray women into caring for them and then laughed at those who had listened to them, Gustave's sweet words and loving glances often recurred to her thoughts, and then she would say to herself,—

"It is a pity, though, that one must not listen to what it gives one so much pleasure to hear."

The occasion expected so impatiently by Madame Pantalon was not long in presenting itself.

A young stockbroker's clerk, in whom Adolphe had great confidence, and whom he consulted when he wanted to make purchases at the Bourse, had informed him of an advantageous investment that was open to anyone having funds at his disposal and Adolphe had put thirty thousand francs in his hands. But the young man to whom he had confided his funds made off one fine morning, carrying with him the sums with which he had been entrusted.

Césarine read this news in the paper and hurried in search of her husband. He was fully aware of the loss he had sustained, but had not thought it necessary to speak of it to his wife. Madame Pantalon approached her husband with the mocking air that had become habitual to her; she held in her hand the paper in which she had just read of the vexatious event.

"Monsieur, have you heard lately from that

honest M. Durimart, in whom you placed so much confidence?"

"Why do you ask me that, madame?"

"Because, if you have not, I can give you some news of him, which I find in this paper. This gentleman whom you thought so honest, and to whom you have entrusted thirty thousand francs, — that was the amount, I believe, that you gave him?"

"Yes, madame, that was the sum."

"Well, the gallant man has fled. He has gone off with his dupes' money."

"I know it."

"Oh, you knew it, and you said nothing to me?"

"What was the use of saying anything?"

"What was the use, do you say? you mean by that, that you might ruin yourself, lose all your fortune, and I should not know what was going on? That is too much! It is quite time that this should be ended. I can stay no longer with a man who neither knows how to win a case nor invest his money. We must separate, monsieur."

"As for that, madame, nothing would suit me better; not that I recognize your right to address a single reproach to me in regard to this last affair, for the loss I have sustained has nothing to do with you; the money I lost was not yours, it was mine. I have not touched your dowry since we were married — I neither wished nor needed to. Today you may take your money back, it is still

intact at your lawyer's, and I am delighted to be able to restore it to you. What I possess myself will be amply sufficient for me if I live alone. You want to keep your daughter—so be it, she will perhaps be better under her mother's care; but I hope that you will allow her sometimes to come and kiss her father.

"Let us separate, then, madame, but without noise, without taking legal steps, without scandal, as well-bred people ought to do. You wish that a woman should have all the privileges of a man; you do not understand how she could be submissive, kind, and gentle to her husband; and I married in the hope of having a pleasant domestic life, a peaceable household, and a companion who would make me happy, who would even love me a little. We were both mistaken. Let us separate as speedily as may be. I wish you all happiness, madame, and I assure you I shall not trouble you."

So saying Adolphe departed, leaving his wife rather dumfounded at the quiet and resolute tone with which he had welcomed their separation. But soon the thought of the new kind of life she was going to lead inflamed her imagination and she ran to tell Elvina.

"Make your preparations, pack your belongings, for we are going away in two days."

"Are we going to travel with my brother?"

"Not at all, there is no question of your brother — we have separated, I have left him."

"Good heavens! Why was that?"

"Why, because we could no longer live together; you must have seen that."

"But, then — to leave my brother!"

"Oh, if you would rather stay with him than come with me, you have the right to do so. But, my little innocent, remember that with me and all the ladies who will accompany me, you will lead a new life; for we are going to be free, be our own mistresses, do nothing but follow our own wishes."

"Really! Where are we going, then?"

"To Brétigny, to my uncle's château, the captain, you know, who is delighted to receive us."

"And are we going there for a long stay?"

"Forever."

"That is indeed long! and what shall we do with ourselves there?"

"Don't be uneasy, we are not likely to be bored; I'll teach you to ride a horse, drill, and use the sword, the sabre, and the pistol. We shall hunt, fish, jump hedges, and even flog the peasants if they are impudent. In fact, we are going to live the same happy vagabond life that the men do— it will be delightful."

CHAPTER V

The Independents on Their Journey. Choice of a Uniform

Having thus characteristically and promptly answered his niece's letter, Captain de Vabeaupont, who was seated in his big armchair, with one of his legs raised upon a stool, took up a speaking-trumpet which was placed on a table beside him, and which served him in place of a bell. The speaking-trumpet was the one he had used to give his orders to his sailors, and it was so resonant that when the old seaman put it to his mouth his voice could be heard from one end of the château to the other.

The former cabin boy did not come running, because his legs were beginning to lose their agility; but he came, as speedily as was possible to him, at the sound of the speaking-trumpet and placed himself in front of his master.

"Lundi-Gras," said the latter to him, "Summon the household, pipe all hands up!"

"All hands, captain?"

"Yes, I have some orders to give."

"Must I bring the dogs up, too?"

"You idiot!"

"They belong to the household, don't they?"

"It is my people that I want. Come, sheer off, old hulk!"

The captain's household was composed at that time — aside from Lundi-Gras — of a rather aged gardener, his daughter Nanon, a stupid, idle, greedy young peasant of sixteen, and Martine, a fat, motherly body of thirty-six, who was an excellent cook, and for that reason was highly esteemed by M. de Vabeaupont.

"Captain, here they are," cried Lundi-Gras, leading in the whole household staff, "give your orders to them."

"My friends," said the old sailor, "I called you here to tell you that I expect a large party of visitors whom my niece will bring with her."

"I'm glad of that," said the cook, "I can now get up great feasts — I shall be able to show you what I can do."

"Yes, Martine, yes; you must distinguish yourself, invent some new dishes, delicacies in particular; for they are ladies who are coming — ladies only."

"Pshaw! not even one little man?"

"Not the smallest sort of a man. Nanon, you will have to make the bedrooms ready — a good many bedrooms."

"Will not these ladies bring their servants?"

"My niece will bring her lady's maid, of course, but I see no necessity for the others to bring theirs. Flanquet, you must make your garden shipshape,

and get some good vegetables and fruits ready for us to use."

"Fruits! vegetables! why, captain, it is only May now. We can't push these things, we have to wait for them."

"Well, look out for it all — and your flowers too — women are so fond of flowers!"

"Oh, yes, but they are always picking them — they devastate the flower-beds."

"Let them pick them, let them devastate all they please; I order you to do so, and not to complain. You, Nanon, will see that the poultry-yard is well stocked, and that there are plenty of eggs in the henhouse."

"When the hens won't lay, I can't make them."

"No, but when they do lay eggs, you need not go and take them and suck them while they are still quite warm."

"Oh, captain, it was M. Lundi-Gras told you that, but it isn't true."

"Lundi-Gras told me nothing; but if I can't walk, I can see what goes on very well from my windows."

"What's that Nanon saying? — that I spoke to you about the eggs?"

"That'll do! Thunderation! you needn't stick in your oar. You have all heard my orders; let every one obey them."

The staff departed in a sufficiently bad humor, except the cook, who loved her art and was

rejoiced to have an opportunity of displaying her culinary talent. But Mademoiselle Nanon, who was as idle as she was greedy, said, shaking her head angrily,—

"Get bedrooms ready for a pack of women, indeed — thank you! I should have a nice time of it! And then women are never contented, one can never make a bed to suit them. There's always something to do over again. I shan't make them at all, that will be the easiest way out of it."

"And my garden. They'll make a nice garden of it for me," grumbled Father Flanquet. "They'll pick all the flowers, they're quite capable of not leaving a single one on its stalk, they will eat the cherries before they are ripe, they'll step on my borders, they'll crush my asparagus and my early peas. A party of women in a beautiful garden like mine! I'd rather see a lot of young colts there."

Four days later the Northern railway brought to Noyon the first convoy of the Independents; it comprised Césarine, Elvina, Mesdames Étoilé, Bouchetrou, Vespuce, Widow Flambart, and Mademoiselle Aglaé, Madame Pantalon's maid, a little brunette, with a lively eye and a turned-up nose, who had never sworn hatred to the men, but who had been quite willing to follow her mistress to Brétigny, as she was very curious to learn what they were going to do in this château; which was quite unknown to her, as she had only been in Césarine's service for some six months.

Numerous trunks accompanied the travellers, for ladies never go anywhere without carrying with them the essentials of the toilet, and the former had such a quantity of gowns, bonnets, caps, fripperies and footgear that sixteen trunks and fifteen bandboxes hardly sufficed to contain them.

But there was still two leagues distance to be covered between Noyon and the captain's château at Brétigny. These ladies got down at the station, and stood in the midst of their formidable array of baggage. Césarine spoke to one of the railway officials.

"Monsieur, we are going to Brétigny."

"That's two leagues from here, madame."

"I know it, I have often made the journey; but then I came in a chaise that I had hired. This time we came by rail — much faster, of course; but now how are we going to get to Brétigny?"

"Follow the road that I'll point out to you, you can't make any mistake, and you can get there, without hurrying yourselves, in two hours and a half."

"What! go without hurrying ourselves? Do you suppose, monsieur, that we are going to travel two leagues on foot?"

"Why, I see no other way."

"How horrid! walk two leagues!" exclaimed Paolina, "and I am nothing of a walker."

"We shall ruin our feet on the pebbles," said pretty Madame Vespuce; "my dainty shoes would soon be torn to pieces."

" I can cover two leagues on foot easily enough," said Madame Flambart, " I walk like a trooper."

" But I can't do it, madame," said Olympiade. " It isn't that I dislike walking, but I have a corn that is aching horribly at this moment."

"Let us see, ladies, and don't be uneasy," said Césarine, " we surely shall not have to go on foot. If they could only procure us four horses, we would take three ladies on the crupper and put our steeds at the gallop. I could make two leagues on horseback in less than half an hour."

" But as we should none of us like to ride on the crupper, there is no question of procuring horses; we must have a carriage. Our baggage, besides, could you take that on the crupper?"

" That is so, we must have a carriage or two if possible. Porter, where can we get carriages?"

" Madame, there is no coach plying between Noyon and Brétigny."

" But isn't it possible that some of the country people about here may have a carryall, a wagonette or even a laundry cart; with money one can always get what one wants. We can't stay here looking at our trunks. Come, Aglaé, you go one way, Madame Flambart the other, and I'll go and ask everywhere, you others take care of the luggage. Oh, if we only had some velocipedes to make the journey."

" Velocipedes! how horrid! The idea of women riding on those things! they are made only for men."

"And I tell you that if I had one I should not hesitate long before placing myself astride it."

The three went off and the others remained with the trunks and bandboxes, looking at them with a piteous expression.

Three-quarters of an hour had passed when the Widow Flambart arrived, out of breath, with her hair in disorder, and disappointed; she had been able to find no vehicles except some wheelbarrows, and she thought the ladies would hardly like to make use of such means of locomotion for two leagues.

"And, besides, who would wheel us?" demanded Paolina.

"There are some peasants who offered to wheel us to Brétigny for a hundred sous. But what would the captain think if he should see us all arrive in wheelbarrows? We should make a comical entrance."

At length Césarine came back, exclaiming,—

"Victory! I have a laundry man's big, covered van; it will hold us all, and we shall be very comfortable; he assured me that it was well hung."

"And our trunks?"

"Oh, I don't think it will hold all those."

But Aglaé arrived with a little cart drawn by a donkey, which was driven by a little boy of ten.

Then there were no more fears, they would have the trunks put in the cart, and the ladies would take the bandboxes with them.

The laundry man came with his van, and our travellers hastened to take their places in it.

The laundry man had put into his cart two seats which he used when he took his family to a fête in the neighborhood. These seats were attached by means of leathern straps; then in the front of the vehicle was a smaller seat for the driver.

"Deuce take it! there are only two seats," said Césarine, when she got into the van.

"I could not put in any more. How many of you are there?"

"Seven."

"Well, three on each seat, one beside me, and there you are!"

"Three on each seat; they will hardly hold us."

"You must squeeze a little, and it will be all right."

"Come, mesdames, let us try it; fortunately, none of you are very big except Madame Flambart. Mesdames Vespuce, Étoilé, Bouchetrou, place yourselves on the front seat. That's it."

"Oh, it is a very tight fit."

"One can't even use one's handkerchief."

"You need not use them. Madame Flambart, Elvina and I will sit on the second seat, and Aglaé with the laundry man. There we are."

Everybody got into the van, but when the Widow Flambart, who was very large, tried to seat herself beside Césarine, who was not thin, she could not do it. Elvina in vain got as close as she could

to the bars of the van, Madame Flambart found it impossible to seat herself. She suddenly exclaimed,—

"How silly we are! Aglaé, who is very thin, shall sit in my place and I will sit beside the laundry man."

The exchange was made. Everybody was seated, the laundry man cracked his whip, they were off! The donkey cart and the little boy followed.

The laundry man's horse went at a jog trot which he never broke; the ladies found that the van shook them horribly.

"You would be shaken worse if you weren't so well packed in," said the laundry man.

"That's right," admitted Césarine, "everything has its good side, and I see that Madame Flambart, who is less squeezed, sometimes bounds so that I am afraid she will fly out of the van."

The widow, in fact, was almost jolted out of her seat, and invariably came down on the laundry man's knee. The latter was a wrinkled old fellow, who did not look at all amiable.

"Hi, there, madame!" he grumbled, "what do you come down on my knees like that for?"

"Do you suppose, laundry man, that I do it on purpose? I think you are very impertinent! It is the jolting of your horrible van which sends me out of my seat like that. I would much rather come down on your knees than fly out of the wagon."

"You must try to hold faster, because, look you, when you come down on my knees like that I can't guide Bibi."

"Bibi moves rather slowly," said Césarine, "can't you whip him a little?"

"That wouldn't do any good at all; Bibi has his own gait, d'ye see; the beasts are like ourselves, they get into a way of doing things and they can't change it."

Presently there came such a violent jolt that the Widow Flambart leaped out of her seat, and in coming down almost crushed the laundry man. The latter voiced some strongly objurgatory remarks; Bibi came to a halt of himself, and Madame Flambart got down from the van, saying,—

"I can't stand it any longer. Oh, I have an idea, I'm going to get into the little cart that is following us; I shall sit on my trunk, and I shall be a hundred times more comfortable there."

"But, Madame Flambart, that cart is already well loaded; the donkey seems hardly able to draw it now, and if you get on he won't be able to walk."

"Pshaw! I'm not so heavy as all that, and donkeys are, generally speaking, very strong. When they object to going on it is only because they are obstinate. But I shall take the whip from the little boy, and I wager I shall leave you behind."

Madame Flambart ran to the cart. Presently

they heard her disputing with the little boy, who did not wish to entrust her with his whip.

She seized it, however, got into the humble vehicle, climbed over the trunks, seated herself at the front, took the reins, and began to whip the donkey, which, to the surprise of the travellers in the van, set off at a gallop and very soon passed Bibi.

"See how I can drive," said the widow, glancing mockingly at the laundry man, "here is a donkey that goes better than your horse."

"Good enough! good enough! we'll soon see how long he can keep it up that way," answered the laundry man shaking his head. "You'll wear him out, you'll exhaust the poor animal. But he won't go as far as Brétigny at that gait, I'm willing to bet you anything."

Ten minutes passed, the cart was about a hundred feet in advance of the van, when suddenly they saw it stop and heard a blood-curdling shriek.

To their horror, the party in the laundry wagon saw that the donkey had fallen and that Madame Flambart had been shot out of the cart, which fortunately was not high, so that she escaped with a mere bump on the forehead.

"Bang!" exclaimed the laundry man, "I knew that was how it would end."

Bibi stopped and Césarine got out of the van to go to Madame Flambart's assistance; but the latter had already picked herself up.

As for the donkey, that was a very different matter; he positively refused to get upon his feet; Césarine, the laundry man, the widow and the child, tried to lift him, but he resisted all their efforts. However, they were not more than two gunshots from Brétigny; Césarine ordered the little boy to remain near the cart, telling him she would soon send some one to his assistance. She got into the laundry van, Madame Flambart did the same, and in the space of five minutes or so they arrived in front of the captain's dwelling.

It was a curious spectacle which the travellers presented as they jumped out of the vehicle that had come into the courtyard of the little château. M. de Vabeaupont, who had dragged himself as far as his balcony, could not get over his surprise and exclaimed,—

"Why, what the devil sort of an equipage have you got hold of?"

"Dear uncle, we had to take what we could find," said Césarine. "Later on we will tell you the story of our adventures. Will you, first of all, send Lundi-Gras and your gardener to help to pick up a donkey which was drawing our baggage; the laundry man will show them the way to it."

At a sign from his master, Lundi-Gras hastened after the laundry man, who left his van in the courtyard. Madame Pantalon hurried the gardener, ordering him to go with Lundi-Gras. Then, addressing her companions,—

"Follow me," she said, "and I will present you to my uncle."

They followed Césarine, who went up to the first story where the old seaman almost invariably stayed. His gout had forced him to return to his lounging chair; but he bowed graciously to the ladies, saying to his niece,—

"You have brought very few people, Césarine; I was expecting a battalion, and I see only the patrol-corps."

"Yes, uncle, we are only the advance guard, the others will come later on. Here are some ladies with whom you are acquainted, Paolina, Madame Flambart, Olympiade, are old friends, Madame Vespuce you also know, do you not?"

"Yes, madame was at the wedding."

"And this tall young lady is my sister-in-law, Elvina."

"Why, how she is grown! She was a little shallop and now she is a man-o'-war. And that dark girl who keeps in the background, who's she?"

"That is Aglaé, my maid. Now, dear uncle, that every one has been duly presented, if you will allow us, we should like to go to our rooms to rest; for the van which carried us from Noyon jolted us terribly, did it not, mesdames?"

"Yes, I'm sure I must be black and blue."

"I feel as if all my bones were broken."

"I am bruised all over."

"I can't hold myself up."

"Go and rest, my dears, and remember one thing: you are at home here; every one can do as she likes, go out, stay in, run about freely; only, you must be prompt at meal times. I breakfast at eleven, dine at six, and I never vary a minute, and if every one is not there, so much the worse for them; I wait for no one, and the meal is served at the appointed time."

The ladies hastened to profit by the permission accorded them. Nanon conducted the newcomers.

"We have bedrooms on the first and second floors and in the attic; you are to choose for yourselves."

"Put these ladies on the first floor, it is their due, for they came first. I have my apartments on the groundfloor, Elvina will have a room beside mine."

"And me, madame?"

"You will have a room in the attic, Aglaé."

"But our trunks? our gowns? our belongings?" cried Madame Vespuce, "it will be impossible for me to rest for a moment until I am sure that my things are safe."

"Nor I, either," remarked Olympiade, "besides, I have some cosmetics and scents and essences in one of my boxes, which are indispensable to my toilet."

"As for me," said Madame Étoilé, "I never use any kind of cosmetic nor any rice or other pow-

der; nature suffices me. But I have some very precious manuscripts in my trunk, some unfinished verses, the commencement of a historical drama. If I were to lose all those, I should never be able to console myself."

"Come, reassure yourselves, ladies," said Césarine, "here is Lundi-Gras, the donkey, the cart, with all our trunks, coming into the courtyard. Your names are on your boxes, and they'll carry them to your apartments for you."

"Bravo! long live Madame Pantalon."

And the ladies went to take possession of their rooms, while Lundi-Gras, assisted by Father Flanquet, took the boxes out of the cart, saying to himself as he did so,—

"All these for their clothes. I hope these ladies have got enough finery. I should not be astonished, if they've often been told that they have pretty little irregular faces, too."

Césarine and her friends had arrived at Brétigny at five o'clock in the afternoon, too greatly fatigued by the jolting they had received in the van to think of anything but resting. Having satisfied themselves as to the condition of their wearing apparel, they threw themselves on their beds and slept until eleven o'clock in the evening. Then they awakened and rose, for they were very hungry and each one rang and asked for a light.

It was Lundi-Gras who came, followed by Nanon, who was yawning and stretching her arms. She

was in a very bad humor because they had forbidden her to go to bed.

But the captain had justly thought that on awakening the travellers would be hungry, and had ordered that their supper should be quite ready for them and the table laid in the dining-room.

Lundi-Gras hastened to conduct the ladies, who joyfully exclaimed at the sight of the well-spread table, and they hastened to seat themselves and drink to the health of their host who had done things so well.

"Why does not the captain sup with us?" demanded the Widow Flambart.

"Because he's in bed and asleep, madame," answered Lundi-Gras. "My captain always goes to bed at ten o'clock, and never takes supper."

"We are keeping you up very late tonight, my poor Lundi-Gras," said Césarine.

"Oh, no, captain, that is all right, when one has to take his watch at sea, he gets his four hours' sleep when he can, and where. I have slept in the rigging and I'm not overfond of bed. But here's Nanon, jingo! I had some trouble to keep that girl awake."

"Mercy, I'm used to going to bed and getting my sleep. It makes me ill if I don't sleep."

"Fie, for shame, my girl," said Paolina, "don't you know that too much sleep brutalizes a person."

"Oh, I care nothing about that."

"She needs to be waked up, does this little girl."

"We'll make a drummer of her," said Césarine. "There's a drum here still, isn't there, Lundi-Gras?"

"Yes, captain, a drum and two horses; the one you used to like to ride formerly; and a little pony which goes like the wind!"

"That's perfect! Elvina, tomorrow you shall try the little pony. Lundi-Gras, you know how to beat the drum?"

"I flatter myself I do."

"You shall teach Nanon to do so; when we have some proclamation to make in the village, she shall do it; she has a shrill voice, and that is what is necessary."

"What? are you going to make a drummer of me, madame? Why, the idea!"

"Hold your tongue, child, and learn to obey without answering. We are about to establish subordination here, are we not, ladies?"

"Yes, yes, subordination is the thing."

"Everybody must obey."

"And everybody must be free."

"Permit me, mesdames, we shall have to regulate that. As for that, we will make it an act of the society."

"A charter!"

"There is no question of a charter; how stupid you are, Olympiade."

"Why, Césarine, I don't like such words as that, and so I warn you."

"Good heavens! I said it jokingly, but, by the way, how came you to mention a charter? We want to form a tribe — the tribe of Independents."

"We are the nucleus of it," said Paolina.

"I concede your nucleus. As a matter of fact, our aim and object is to acquire the rank in society that the men have usurped, am I not right?"

"Yes, yes!"

"We will resume everything," said Madame Flambart, "we are capable of everything."

"Everything! that's going rather far, isn't it, mesdames?"

"No, no!" cried the widow, "I will engage to do everything that a man can do. Tomorrow we must have it drummed about the country that people can find at Captain de Vabeaupont's château women who can do anything that is asked of them."

"That's rather a doubtful proclamation; if that is drummed about, what will they think of us?"

"I meant to say, who are capable of doing everything that men can do."

"My dearest, before drumming anything we must have a constitution drawn up, article by article."

"Yes, that's what we need."

"Good heavens, what a headache I have got," said Madame Vespuce.

"And we must swear to conform to it."

"You forget, Madame Pantalon, that it has been settled that we are to have no swearing."

"Ah, that's true. For the matter of that, before deliberating on anything we must all be together."

"There are so few of us here."

"Well, let's go to bed."

"Yes, we'll go to bed."

The next day two big char-à-bancs brought to M. de Vabeaupont's Madame Dutonneau, Madame Grassouillet, Madame Boulard and six other young women who also wished to be enrolled among the Independents, and who had taken their flight with or without the consent of their husbands. There were also among them some unmarried ladies of middle-age and some of those ladies who were married only in name.

Madame Boulard had a chignon on which a baby might have played horse; it gave rise to numerous whisperings among the first comers, who said among themselves,—

"She does things generously."

"She wanted to prove that she places much value on that adornment."

"But how could she bring herself to leave her husband, who adores her."

"Because since her accident at the ball he does not adore her. It seems that up to then he had not perceived that his wife wore false hair."

"That's amazing!"

"When he learned it, he forbade her to wear it. Then arose quarrels, disputes, and, finally, a rupture."

"And now Madame Boulard indemnifies herself — she is all chignon."

M. Fouillac accompanied the last comers. He paid his respects to Césarine, and said affably,—

"For a long time past your uncle the captain has invited me to come to his château. I did not hasten to avail myself of this invitation, because I knew I should not find any of the fair sex here, that sex which makes the charm of our existence, and to whom I have consecrated mine. But now it is different, the ladies are in full sway, and, that being so, I ventured to accompany them here also."

"You did very well to come. We know you for our friend, M. Fouillac; we shall count on you when we have any commissions for Paris."

"I shall be entirely at your orders."

"There are two good horses here; you can take one to go as far as the railroad. You can mount a horse?"

"Oh, yes — as far as mounting goes — I know how to mount one, but I don't know how to keep on him; I am too light, I fall immediately."

"We can have the horse put in the cabriolet."

"Don't be uneasy about me, I shall manage to get there."

Césarine presented the newcomers to her uncle; then, while they were establishing themselves on all the floors of the château, she said to Elvina,—

"Now, I am going to kiss my little girl, my Georgette. Will you come with me?"

"Oh, yes, sister, with pleasure; are we going on foot?"

"No, indeed; it is quite at the other end of the village; we'll take the two horses, and then, by means of a gallop, we shall be at the nurse's in ten minutes. Hello, Lundi-Gras!"

"Here I am, captain."

"Saddle the two horses for my sister and I."

"At once, captain."

"Why does Lundi-Gras call you captain?"

"Because when I was quite little I had the habit of ordering him about, and he always obeyed me as he obeyed my uncle."

Césarine and Elvina rode off on their horses. Madame Pantalon had a perfect seat, she rode as well as a man, she was afraid of nothing, and leaped over hedges and ditches with admirable skill. The young girl lacked her sister's self-possession, her boldness, she sat well and managed her horse gracefully, but she leaped neither hedges nor ditches, although her sister-in-law shouted to her,—

"Come along! do as I do! jump over all obstacles—jump! jump, hang it!"

But Elvina did not listen to Césarine, and she did well; for in leaping over a rather high hedge, the beautiful equestrian had not seen a little peasant boy who was seated behind it, spreading some curd cheese on his bread.

Fortunately, the horse did not come down on him, the feet of the animal barely grazing him as

it covered the ground; but the urchin was so frightened that he gave vent to the most fearful howls, asserting that he was crushed.

Césarine dismounted. Some peasants came running. The little boy cried and showed his white cheese covered with dirt.

"Where are you hurt?" some one asked him.

"I don't know; but look here—she has spoiled all my cheese."

"Did the horse really touch you?"

"I don't know, my cheese is full of earth. It was my lunch."

"You aren't hurt, then?"

"It's my cheese; but I just missed having the horse on my back."

Césarine gave a hundred sous to the little fellow to buy some more cheese, and all the villagers exclaimed,—

"Isn't he lucky, this small boy, to find himself there almost under the horse, and to get a hundred sous for it?"

Madame Pantalon remounted her horse, she was willing to go a little slower now, for Elvina said to her,—

"My dear sister, how unlucky you would have been if that boy had been a little more to the left. I assure you that I shall never jump over the hedges."

"You are right; I shall content myself with ditches in future. But then, who the devil could

have imagined that there was a little boy behind that hedge?"

"In the country you know well that one should always look out. Half the accidents that occur in hunting are the result of imprudence. Oh, if I were to hunt —"

"You would go and visit all the burrows before shooting into them. I don't believe you would carry home much game."

"I would much rather go home empty-handed than have to reproach myself with killing some one."

They arrived at the nurse's. Little Georgette, who was a twelve-month old, was well; she was a very pleasing child.

"She looks like my brother," said Elvina.

"I'm sure I hope not," said Césarine.

"But my brother is very good-looking."

"That is possible; but I do not care that my daughter should resemble him."

"Because you are angry with him now; but that will not last forever."

"My dearest, when I left my husband it was that I might never hear of him again. Not a word more on the subject, Elvina; let us go back to the château."

They were awaiting Césarine impatiently, for all the Independents were now gathered together, and having recognized Madame Pantalon as their chief, they wished that she should regulate their time at

the château. But the dinner was served, and the captain had already shouted through his speaking trumpet,—

"Dinner! It is six o'clock and all business will be put off until the evening."

After dinner, during which Madame Flambart took a thought too much wine, just to show that she knew how to do the same as a man, Madame Pantalon rose, and said,—

"Mesdames, I ask for a moment's silence, for I wish to treat of a very interesting subject."

Silence was not a very easy thing to obtain in a gathering composed of fifteen women and two men; for the captain and Fouillac were admitted to the conference. However, they tried to obey, and only the faintest whisperings could be heard.

"Mesdames, or, rather, brave Independents. I like that much better; besides, that is the name we have adopted."

"Hear! hear!"

"Very good!"

"I should have preferred that we had been called 'progressives,'" said Paolina, "for we are marching towards progress."

"That would be pretentious. 'Independents' is franker."

"I should have proposed that we should be known as emancipated women," suggested Madame Grassouillet."

"Not half bad," said the captain, laughing,

"emancipated women! that title would suit you very well."

"No, uncle, emancipated is a good word for young girls; but we are women. It is not necessary that people should take us for schoolgirls."

"As for me," said Madame Flambart in a doleful voice, "I should have liked, because of the character we are about to reassume, and to impose on these gentlemen — besides, it would recall antiquity —"

"Well, what is it you would have liked?"

"I should have liked — besides, it would have done honor to our sentiments —"

"Do, please, finish."

"I should have liked that we should have been called Romans."

"My dearest," said Césarine, "as the peasants are not very well-informed, when any one spoke of the Romans they would think that it was a question of salad.[1] Besides, the name of Independents has already been adopted by us; if you revert incessantly to what we have settled and done with, we shall arrive at nothing."

"Madame Pantalon is right."

"We are the Independents."

"Then the incident is — closed. I don't quite like that word — but it states the case."

"It is parliamentary."

"I concede the word closed. I come to that

[1] Romain — Roman; romain — cos lettuce.

which I wanted to propose to you; don't you think that if we wish to engage in some exercises, to go out together, show ourselves in a body in the country, that we should do well to have a uniform?"

"Oh, yes, yes."

"Most certainly, we must have a uniform."

"That will be delightful!"

"And when we go out together—"

"People will take you for the National Guard of the country," said Fouillac.

"Uncle, is there a National Guard in the village?"

"No, niece."

"Then are there any gendarmes?"

"No, niece."

"Police officers?"

"Not one."

"Who guards the inhabitants, then?"

"They guard themselves."

"And if there are robbers, who arrests them?"

"The rural guard."

"All alone!"

"He is aided by the mayor, the assistant mayor, the municipal council, those are the authorities. But thieves do not trouble villages much, and if they were to present themselves here, by the beard of the prophet, they would get a queer reception. All the same, I don't think the peasants would be at all displeased to have a National Guard of pretty women."

"Well, if it doesn't do them any good it can't do them any harm."

"Let us get back to the uniform, Césarine!"

"Yes, we were speaking of the uniform."

"Independents, here is what I propose. Our uniform must not be too showy, but it must be neat and becoming."

"Yes, it is essential that it should be becoming."

"And in good taste."

"And that it should fit us well."

"Oh, that will depend on our dressmakers."

"Let us hear what you propose."

"A blue and white striped skirt, a loose jacket, what the men call a tub coat, of light cloth, blue, bordered with red and with red facings, a single row of white metal buttons so that it may be buttoned all down the front; a little black tie; a leathern belt; little white gaiters over the boots; and, lastly, a square crowned cap with a vizor, a silver aigrette, and a tassel which droops over one side. Well, what do you say to that?"

The ladies looked at each other, not one of them appeared satisfied.

"I don't like the blue and white striped skirt," said Madame Dutonneau; "the white makes one look stouter."

"Why not have an orange skirt?" said Paolina; "orange is so pretty."

"Orange is not becoming to me; I should like white, unbroken by any color, best."

"I detest gaiters; the foot looks ill-dressed in them."

"Why should not the jacket be green? That isn't so common as blue."

"A single row of buttons, that is not enough; I should like four rows."

"You would look like a toreador."

"A cap is not becoming to me," said Madame Vespuce.

"What would you have instead then?"

"I should like a policeman's helmet better."

"I should like a busby," said Madame Flambart.

"With a feather, perhaps?"

"No, but with an aigrette."

Césarine had in vain asked for silence; having no bell she then seized her uncle's speaking trumpet, and made such a noise in speaking through it that the ladies were obliged to be silent.

"Independents," said Césarine, "you have acknowledged me as your leader; I propose to you a uniform which will be very suitable, and which, besides, you will only wear at large gatherings; if instead of adopting it, you each propose a costume according to your own taste, it will be a very bad augury for our installation, and we shall never put ourselves on a stable footing."

"Césarine is right," said Madame Flambart, "we must submit to her decisions. As for me, I shall have a uniform made such as she has proposed."

"And I also."

"I also, with the exception of some slight modifications of little importance."

"That will do for me, save some little trifles in the fashion—"

"That is understood."

"We adopt it."

"Now, ladies, write this evening to your dressmakers in Paris; give them your orders, and M. Fouillac will have the kindness to start to-morrow morning for Paris with your letters."

"Yes, very willingly. Not only will I carry your letters, but I will see your dressmakers; I will urge them to set about your orders at once, and, if you wish to charge me with that duty, I will bring your uniforms back myself."

"Oh, you are charming! And our caps?"

"And your caps."

"We will explain in our letters how we want them to be made."

"That is understood; you shall have everything done as you wish. I'll play the devil with the dressmakers, the milliners, the hatters, for you to have everything this week."

The ladies returned to their rooms to write to their dressmakers, and the next morning Fouillac took the epistles and left for Paris.

CHAPTER VI

The Rural Guard

While awaiting the return from Paris of their comrade and messenger, M. Fouillac, Madame Pantalon, who did not wish to remain inactive, proposed to have it drummed about the village that any one in need of services in the way of handicrafts, arts, or professions, for which they were accustomed to apply to men, might address the Independents at the château, and that those ladies would undertake, gratuitously, to do those things for which they had always been accustomed to hire men.

This motion was adopted by the majority, though there were some exceptions. Madame Vespuce exclaiming,—

"But it seems to me that you are going a little too fast; for some one is certain to want you for something that you do not know how to do."

"My dear friend!" answered Césarine, "when one founds a society, an institution, goes into an enterprise, one must never appear to be doubtful of anything; one promises a good deal and does the best one can. Besides, can we not always, among ourselves, find one who can do that of which the

others are ignorant? As for me, I am perfectly acquainted with the code; I know law, for I have studied Cujus and Barthole, I should not be at a loss if asked to plead in court. Paolina is well versed in literature; Madame Flambart has studied chemistry; Olympiade, medicine; Madame Dutonneau is as strong as Hercules, she could carry three children on her head, and a table into the bargain."

"And a table into the bargain? Oh, I should like to see that."

"Well, ladies, one of these evenings I will afford you this spectacle; we will have a gymnastic seance, and I will floor you all."

"Floor us; what do you mean by that?"

"I used a term employed by boxers; when a boxer is successful, he says that he has 'floored' his opponent."

"Pardon me, I do not understand such language."

"I know how to play billiards," said Madame Grassouillet.

"I am a musician."

"My father is an architect, I know all about building a house."

"What did I tell you, mesdames? You see, we are qualified to undertake anything. Hello! Lundi-Gras, where is that old cabin boy? Aglaé, go and get Lundi-Gras and Nanon!"

The young lady's maid found Lundi-Gras in

made herself a belt and attached the drum to it, stuck the drumsticks in her waist, and went to the village square, shouting,—

"I am the rural guard. Not Farineux — I have taken his place, and I am going to beat the drum and announce something very interesting to you; open your ears."

The words of the gardener's girl, the drum she wore at her side, attracted the peasants' attention; and when she beat the roll on her drum the villagers came running from all sides, shouting,—

"Why, Nanon's beating the drum. What a comical maid it is!"

"Nanon's beating a roll on the drum."

"Hold your tongue, you there! and listen, I'm going to proclaim. Hum, hum! wait a bit, I must try to remember! good! I have it now. 'We beg to state (yes, they always begin like that), we beg to state to the inhabitants of the neighborhood that men are now women — no, that's not it — that women are now men — and if you have need of anything, no matter what — that is to say, of one thing or another — they will lend you a hand at the château, and they charge themselves with undertaking — no that's not it — oh, yes! they will undertake gratis — or —"

Nanon could not continue, for a vigorous hand took her by the ear. It was Farineux, the rural guard, who said as he pinched her hard,—

"What are you doing here, Nanon Flanquet,

with that drum at your side? and what are you saying to them all here?"

"Ow! Father Farineux, let go of my ear! don't pinch me like that — I'm making a proclamation."

"A proclamation! The idea! I should like to see you! I am the only one who has the right to make proclamations in Brétigny; understand that, ducky! seeing that I am the rural guard."

"Why, that is to say, you were, Father Farineux, but you aren't any longer; I have replaced you — they've given your place to me. Ha! ha! that astonishes you! well, so it did me; but that's how it is, all the same."

All the villagers began to laugh, exclamations could be heard from all sides.

"Ha, ha! Nanon is rural guard."

"Why, here's a maid!"

"Have you changed your 'sect,' Nanon?"

"You are not a girl, then?"

"Yes, yes, I am still a girl; but that doesn't prevent them at the château helping you free of cost, and Madame Pantalon has made me rural guard instead of Farineux."

"Ha, ha! Madame Pantalon!"

"What a name!"

"She must be a pretty bold woman."

"It's the lady who just missed crushing little Badou with her horse."

"Yes, it's the captain's niece, and she has made me rural guard."

"She's made you rural guard! and what right has she to do that, your Madame Pantalon?"

"Dang it! I don't know. They are like that at the château, a parcel of females who think the world is upside down, and they wish to put it back in its place."

"Look at that now! The world is upside down! That's a case of politics, that is."

"Well, come with me to the mayor for a minute, Nanon, and we will see if he wants you for rural guard."

Nanon did not much care to go before the mayor; but Farineux would not let go of her, so there was no way of resisting.

The mayor was an old farmer who still cultivated his lands; he was a man of sixty, with a good face and a rather shrewd glance; he had an immense fund of good sense, which is the most precious commodity for one in authority.

"M. le Maire," said the rural guard, pushing Nanon before him, "I have here a daughter of Flanquet, the gardener at the château; I think she's either been struck on the head with a hammer, or else she's a som — som — a sleep walker, I mean; she has a drum, as you see; she's been making a proclamation, and saying all sorts of ridiculous things — and, last but not least, she says they've given her my place."

The mayor looked at Nanon and could not help smiling, as he said,—

"Is all this true, little one? What! you want to take Farineux's place?"

"Goodness! why not, M. le Maire?"

"What, you want to be rural guard?—you? and who has put such ideas as these into your head? Look here, Nanon, just reflect a little. If you were a boy, we might understand that you could aspire to the place of rural guard—but a young girl—you have had a bad dream, my child, and you are not yet quite awake."

"No, it is a fact, M. le Maire, I haven't been dreaming at all. Besides, I should never have thought of it myself; it was Madame Pantalon, our master's niece, who said to me, 'Go and drum in the village what is written on this paper,' and I answered her, 'It is the rural guard who makes the proclamations.' Then she said, 'I turn him out—that is to say, I give you his place.'"

"She has no right to turn me out—has she, M. le Maire?"

"No, certainly not; perhaps this is only a joke."

"I don't like such jokes as that—I'm going to arrest Nanon—shan't I, M. le Maire?"

"One minute, Farineux. Before arresting this little girl, it will be better to have an explanation with Madame Pantalon, M. de Vabeaupont's niece. You will go to the château, you will ask her what she wished Nanon to do; why she allowed her to go out with a drum?—you were a servant at the château, weren't you, little one? Did they discharge you?"

"Not a bit of it, M. le Maire, quite the contrary, they have promoted me a step, since they have made me rural guard."

"She won't give it up; did one ever see such a mule of a girl?"

"Go to the château, Farineux; you can get no explanation, except from the old captain's niece."

"Here is the captain's niece! what do you want of her? I am ready to answer you."

It was Césarine, who was pushing through the peasants to reach the mayor. Curious to know the result of the proclamation, to see the effect it had produced on the natives, she had left the château a short time after the gardener's daughter, and, not finding the damsel in the square, had learned from an old woman that they had taken the drummer-girl before the mayor.

The unexpected arrival of the captain's niece made a sensation at the mairie, the more so as she assumed a very arrogant tone, holding her riding crop in her hand, and appearing much irritated.

But Nanon uttered an exclamation of joy, and ran to Césarine.

"Oh, madame!" she cried, "you did well to come — they don't want me to be rural guard, and Farineux wanted to put me in prison."

"Is this girl telling the truth, monsieur? By what right do you arrest my people?"

"And by what right does she want to take my place?"

"Hold your tongue, Farineux, and let me speak to madame; but first of all, madame, will it not please you to be seated."

"That is unnecessary, monsieur, I am in a hurry to be gone. You are the mayor of Brétigny?"

"Yes, madame," replied the mayor, "and, as the principal authority of this country side, I ask you what this joke means, for I cannot think that you were serious in styling that young girl a rural guard."

"And why should I not mean it seriously, monsieur?"

"Because that office is filled by a man."

"My friends and I, authorized by my uncle, are going to change all that. We have enough information, talent, strength, courage, to fill any employment now engaged in by man."

"Madame, I do not doubt your talents or your skill. You can do anything you please at M. de Vabeaupont's, take women and make coachmen or grooms of them — that is your business; but you have not the right to dismiss a rural guard or to nominate another."

"No right! is not my uncle lord of the manor in this village?"

"Good heavens! Madame, since you are so well-informed you ought to know that there are no lords of the manor now; there are proprietors, some of whom are very rich, and who do a great deal of good among the poor of the country, when

they are charitable; but they cannot nominate the rural guards, for all that. In towns there are prefects and sub-prefects; and in small communities there are the mayor and his assistant and the members of the municipal council; it is they, madame, who appoint to all vacant offices."

Césarine bit her lips, she felt she was beaten by the village authority; but she presently answered,—

"What! my uncle owns a great deal of property in this country; meadows, vineyards and fields, and cannot he have them guarded by whoever he wishes, to prevent his grapes being eaten or his vegetables and fruits stolen?"

"Pardon me, madame, your uncle can, if he so pleases, send all his domestics to watch over his property, but that will not prevent Farineux, the rural guard, from having an eye to it also."

"Yes, yes, I shall have an eye to it. And if madame wants any proclamations read I shall make them very differently to Nanon, who says very stupid things. But, as I have burst my drum if madame likes, Nanon can accompany me with hers."

Césarine did not answer the rural guard, but said to the mayor,—

"Monsieur, is it also forbidden to beat a drum in the village? my friends and I are having a uniform made—"

"Do you wish to be a National Guard, madame?"

"Not yet, monsieur; we shall see about that, later on; meanwhile, when we go out in a body, a drum at our head would be very nice."

"So long as it is not to encroach on the rights of the rural guard, but to merely amuse yourselves, beat your drum as much as you please; they will think there are some mountebanks in the village — that is all."

Madame Pantalon bit her lips again; she bowed to the mayor and, making a sign to Nanon to follow her, returned to the château.

Nanon followed her mistress, saying to herself,—

"How funny that mayor is to want that there should be no lords now; then why do they sing,—

Yours is the right supreme
As lord of this village?

No later than yesterday I heard Mamzelle Elvina singing and playing that on her piano."

Some days passed while they were impatiently awaiting Fouillac. To pass the time they drilled; Lundi-Gras gave the ladies lessons in fencing and taught them to fire a pistol and to draw a sword; he even wanted to show them how to handle a boarding pike, but this weapon was refused by the Independents, who had not as yet any intention of entering the naval or merchant service.

At length a letter from Fouillac announced his return on the following day, with all the uniforms.

He begged Césarine to send the captain's old

chaise to Noyon to get the numerous packages, which were to come by rail addressed to the ladies at the château.

The ladies uttered joyful exclamations. They were burning for the morrow. Lundi-Gras was to go with the chaise to Noyon, and bring back the charming Fouillac and the much-desired vestments.

They voted a compliment to the person who had executed their commissions so well, and Paolina took it upon herself to write one in verse; Madame Dutonneau had proposed that they should kiss him, but this proposition was vetoed by the majority. The scratches of which he bore the marks had done him a great injury.

The day came, the chaise had gone. All the ladies had risen very early, although they did not expect Fouillac till towards midday. They breakfasted hurriedly. In vain the captain said to his guests,—

"Triple portholes, mesdames, give yourselves time to eat! Your uniforms won't get here any sooner because you choke yourselves."

"Oh, captain, we are so curious to see them."

"And to put them on."

"We shall put them on as soon as they get here."

"And we'll all come before the captain and he shall pass us in review."

"And I shall give each of you a pretty rifle that I have had purchased on purpose to offer to you."

"Thank you, captain!"

"And some sabres?"

"We shall see later on. You are not going to war immediately."

Nanon was placed on picket duty on the road, to watch for the arrival of the vehicle; the captain had consented to let her take his speaking-trumpet, into which she was to shout, "Here they are." Césarine wanted her to fire a gun, but the young girl refused and took the speaking-trumpet.

The moment she spied the chaise, instead of shouting, "Here they are!" as she had been instructed, Nanon, who was thinking of her favorite repast, bellowed "Sixteen eggs!" but this passed unnoticed except by a peasant on the road, who remarked,—

"Begorra, what an omelette!"

All the ladies came running to receive the chaise. It arrived at last, bringing the trunks and Fouillac, who was overwhelmed with thanks and shakings of the hand; then Madame Étoilé advanced and prepared to read her verses to him; but the ladies threw themselves on the parcels, each one seized the one addressed to her and bore it off, saying,—

"We are going to dress."

"You can pay your compliment later on."

"Yes, yes; let's go and dress!"

Paolina decided to do as did the others, though she muttered rather discontentedly,—

"Hum, how fond of adornment they are, how

full of coquetry! I know this costume will become me well."

Fouillac, who had no desire to hear Madame Étoilé's verses, went to keep the captain company, that gentleman being still at the table.

At the end of an hour, for these ladies took pains with their toilets, the buzz of many voices announced their approach; they all came in, hurrying to let the captain see them, who made them stand in rank before him and then shouted with laughter and exclaimed,—

"So that's how you put yourselves into uniform, is it? I compliment you."

In fact no two of these ladies were dressed alike. The skirts, in the first place, varied in color or design; the jackets were blue, but one of them was profusely trimmed with passementerie, another was plainly bound; one had four rows of buttons, another had one; some had gilt buttons, some silver. The head coverings differed as greatly; some of them had round caps, some square; police helmets, busbies, with feathers, aigrettes, or cords or tassels; in short, the costumes were very nice — but, they were not uniform.

As at first each of these ladies had been so taken up in looking at herself that she had not noticed anyone else, it was not until they were all gathered together that they perceived the trifling resemblance that existed between their new costumes. Césarine scowled and said,—

"Confound it, mesdames! Is this how you have followed my instructions?"

Madame Grassouillet answered, in a very decided tone,—

"You proclaimed that we were Independents! wherefore, then, should we not do as we please?"

"Madame is right," said the captain. "It is exactly like those men who prate about liberty, and who want to compel everybody to be of their opinion."

CHAPTER VII

Great Works. The Ladies Establish a Journal

Let us leave these strong-minded ladies for a short time, and return to their husbands — the poor, deserted husbands! What was I going to say? I was absolutely going to pity them, whereas commiseration would be entirely thrown away on these gentlemen; Adolphe was now free to plead without his wife meddling with his cases or his clients; M. Étoilé was no longer obliged to listen to his muse's metrical utterances — which were anything but entertaining to him; M. Bouchetrou had plenty of time to get vaccinated, and could dress as his fancy dictated; M. Vespuce could take his shirtmaker out walking as often as he pleased; M. Grassouillet was no longer obliged to witness his Amandine's coquetries; and, lastly, handsome Dutonneau could feast as many grisettes as he pleased at the restaurant. So you see, these husbands were by no means to be pitied; and it is probably the same with many others whom it is needless, and, indeed, would be out of place for me to mention here.

Why are there so many husbands who fee

lighter, more cheerful, more disposed to amuse themselves when they are away from their wives, whom sometimes they love very fondly? Is it not the ladies' fault, in that they assume the part of preceptors to their husbands, and scold them much as the former scold their scholars when they are wayward and do not know their lessons?

It would be so easy for these ladies to desist from scolding; if they were to laugh, if they were to joke with their husbands, instead of being ill-tempered with them, the latter would not go abroad to seek distraction and pleasure.

What I now say to you is not new, many authors have said it before, and these ladies have no more listened to them than they will listen to me. But no matter; the truth cannot be too often repeated.

However, Frédéric Duvassel had not been at all surprised to learn that Madame Pantalon had separated from her husband; for, from the very day of their wedding, he had foreseen that the couple would not form a peaceable, amicable household. Frédéric was incessantly pursued by his brother, who was still in love with Elvina, and insisted on seeing her.

Adolphe knew that his wife and sister were in Brétigny, at M. de Vabeaupont's, and he had told his friend. Moreover, as all the abandoned husbands knew it also, these gentleman were perfectly acquainted with their wives' plans, and consulted among themselves whether they should allow the

ladies to work them out or whether they should oppose them.

Frédéric, who was admitted to the husbands' meetings, said to them,—

"Will you allow me, gentlemen, to give you my advice? for, although I am a bachelor, I beg you to believe that I have the most lively interest in married men—in fact I have a preference for husbands."

"Give us your advice."

"Your better halves—I think that word very deceptive, for one half usually resembles the other, and in the household it is quite the contrary—no matter, the word is consecrated—let us pass on; your wives, then, are very exalted in their ideas, and they have been carried away by notions which are novel to them. I don't think it is necessary to take the thing seriously. It will not be long before they are obliged to recognize how impossible of realization are their plans. The essential thing is to make them feel some inconveniences; but to do that we must not laugh at them, but must, on the contrary, appear to take the thing seriously. Will you allow me to act for you, and promise me one thing only—to second me when I have need of you."

"Yes, yes—"

"Act for us, we give you a free hand."

"Well, then, messieurs, I am certain that before long the sheep will return to the fold."

"You needn't hurry yourself, you know."

"Give yourself time."

"Oh, I shall act prudently. Tomorrow I shall go and establish myself in the village of Brétigny; I think I shall do well to seek a lodging at some peasant's. From there I can direct my batteries—and I shall write to Adolphe as soon as I have anything of interest to communicate to you."

"That's understood."

"But act only little by little."

"Be easy as to that; I am perfectly aware that we must allow these ladies the time to get bored because of their separation from you, if it only be from the desire to torment you."

Young Gustave was wild with delight when his brother said to him,—

"We are going to Brétigny tomorrow?"

"What luck! to the captain's château? Shall we be with the ladies?"

"That would be very clever. We should be ill-received, perhaps shown the door. We must, on the contrary, manage so that no one in the château suspects we are in the village. Pay strict attention to this, Gustave, I will only take you with me on the condition that you obey me strictly; that you do not seek to see Mademoiselle Elvina before I give you permission; that you do, in fact, all that I tell you."

"Yes, brother, I promise. But then I shall be near her, in the same place in which she is living."

"Adolphe told me that his wife's maid, little Aglaé, did not share her mistress' ideas. I must contrive to get hold of that young woman."

"Yes, and we must attach her to our interest."

"That concerns me. You will not go prowling about the château, or I'll send you back to Paris."

The next day Frédéric arrived in Brétigny, accompanied by Gustave and his valet, named La Brie, a very intelligent fellow of whom he hoped to make use in the plan he had conceived.

It was not difficult for the traveller to find a lodging with one of the villagers, above all as he did not show himself exacting and was willing to pay without bargaining. Frédéric gave the preference to a peasant named Matois,[1] whose physiognomy denoted that he was rightly named.

Hardly was he installed at the peasant's, whose wife seemed very fond of talking, when Frédéric inquired about the persons living at the château.

"Ah, they've got some queer people there, just now," said the woman.

"What do I understand you to say? Does the château no longer belong to M. de Vabeaupont?"

"Yes, indeed. But what I wanted to say was that his niece, who is now Madame Pantalon, has installed herself there with a parcel of women who have had it drummed about that if any one has work he wants done in the neighborhood, they will undertake to do it for nothing."

[1] Matois: Cunning, sharp, sly.

"Indeed! Why, it seems to me that that proposition should not be distasteful to you."

"Pshaw! leave them alone for that; it was only to make game of us that they had that proclamation made. What proves it to be a farce, they wanted to make Nanon, the gardener's daughter, their rural guard, but Farineux, who occupies that place, would not listen to it! — nor the mayor either."

"They were perhaps wrong. I should have let them do it to see how it would turn out."

"Indeed! I should have been well protected against pilferers by that Nanon, who's as greedy as she can be, and can't pass a currant or gooseberry bush without picking some. By the way, Matois, there is still a breach in our garden wall by which any one that likes can come in to the premises; haven't you been to Giraud, the mason, to tell him to come and mend it for us?"

"I did and he would have come, he even sent his tools and his mortar; but this morning he got a sprain and he isn't able to budge."

"If that is the case, there is no knowing when we shall get it mended — that's a nice thing, that is."

"Well, Father Matois," said Frédéric, "it seems to me that here is an occasion for assuring yourself of the good-will and talent of these ladies at the château. Go there and ask for a mason, or rather a masoness, to mend the breach in your wall. What risk do you run — since they will do it for

nothing? If they don't do it well, you won't lose any money."

"You want me to go to the château and ask for a mason in petticoats? Why, the idea! I should never dare, monsieur, they would send me off with a flea in my ear."

"You are wrong — I am persuaded that so far from sending you away Madame Pantalon and her followers will be delighted to see that their proclamation has taken effect."

"These gentlemen are right," said Madame Matois; "you go there, my man, they can't eat you — and mercy, since it will cost us nothing we may as well try it."

"Well, wife, since you all advise me to do so I will go at once."

"Yes, go, Father Matois, but don't say that you have Parisians lodging with you — we have our reasons for not wishing them to know it at the château."

"Enough said, monsieur; since that is your wish — and, then, I think I understand. Ha, ha, ha! I'm going to look for a mason in petticoats."

Father Matois was gone. The young men placed themselves in a room of which the window overlooked the highway which led to the château. From thence they could see if their host brought back anyone with him.

"Suppose Elvina should come!" said Gustave to his brother.

"Do you think she will? Do you suppose that young girl has any liking for the occupation of a mason? I feel sure no one will come; but I am curious to know what they will say to Father Matois."

When the peasant reached the château, he found Lundi-Gras in the courtyard and the latter asked the old man what he wanted.

"Monsieur Cabin-boy," answered Father Matois (for in the country Lundi-Gras had never been otherwise named), "you have with you here some ladies who are willing to do all kinds of work and charge nothing for it."

"There's a small battalion of women here; I've shown them how to use arms and mount a horse. Well?"

"Well, I have a wall that needs mending — and I come to ask for a workwoman."

"Do you think I've taught my pupils to build houses?"

"Take me to Madame Pantalon. I came because of her proclamation. It is her I have to do with."

Lundi-Gras shrugged his shoulders, but he said to the peasant, "Follow me!"

The Independents were gathered in a vast hall which they had taken for their deliberations. They were engaged in establishing the rules of their society and had not yet succeeded in adopting a single article, when Lundi-Gras presented himself,

followed by Father Matois, and addressed himself to Césarine,—

"Captain, here's a man who lives in the village and wants something of you."

"Speak, honest man, what do you want?"

"Madame, pardon me, excuse the liberty I take —but you have had it drummed about the village that you will undertake — free of charge — to help us, in no matter what, so that we shall have no need to apply to men for their services."

"Certainly, and what then?"

"Madame, I have a wall that needs mending, and I come to ask of the one among you who is a mason if she will come to work at my place."

All the ladies looked at him; they had not expected to be required for that kind of work; they could already be heard whispering among themselves,—

"As if we would work at his wall!"

"A pretty thing for him to propose."

"This peasant must be making game of us!"

Césarine herself said in a low voice,—

"Devil carry him away with his wall! It's very vexatious, though, ladies, to be obliged to reply with a refusal to the very first demand that is made upon us."

But the Widow Flambart suddenly rose, exclaiming,—

"No, mesdames, you are mistaken, this peasant's request will not be refused. It is not a very

difficult thing to pile up a little rubble, or plaster rubbish and stick it together with mortar. I will undertake it."

"What, Madame Flambart! you think you know how to play the mason?"

"You have said yourself that if one makes up one's mind one can accomplish anything. A breach in a wall is but child's play. Peasant, have you any plaster, any tools?"

"Oh, yes, madame, I've all that is necessary; hod, trowel, mortar — and some stones for the wall."

"We'll start then. Oh, by the way, I must have an assistant, a mason never works without an assistant. Who will come with me?"

Nobody stirred; a murmur was heard from all sides.

"Not I! not I! not I!"

Then Césarine called her lady's maid, and said to her,—

"Aglaé, you will accompany Madame Flambart and help her in her mason's work."

"You are going to be the hodman, my poor Aglaé," said Elvina to the young waiting-maid. The latter pouted and muttered,—

"But, madame, I have never learned how —"

"What one doesn't know, one can learn. Go, Aglaé, and don't answer me back."

"But, madame"—

"Since Madame Flambart gives you the

example, it seems to me you ought to be able to imitate her."

Frédéric and his brother were at the window; the former uttered an exclamation of surprise when he saw Madame Flambart and young Aglaé appear.

"It isn't Elvina," said Gustave.

"Thank God for that," answered Frédéric, "for I should never have forgiven her for playing the mason. As to poor Aglaé, by the face she is making, it is easy to see that she does not come here to please herself. Here they are, we mustn't show ourselves. La Brie is in the garden, but they don't know him; he is a clever fellow, he has put on a blouse — they'll take him for a peasant."

Madame Flambart walked proudly into the house saying,—

"Where is this wall? Let me see it, and I will mend it for you in two seconds."

"Are you the mason, madame?" said Mother Matois, making a fine curtsey.

"I am — anything I please; I know how to do everything. Let us see your breach."

Father Matois took the lady into his garden and showed her the space that needed to be closed. The stones were in a heap quite near, and the cement and all the tools which masons use. Aglaé, instead of looking at these things, was glancing at La Brie, who was walking about a little farther off.

Madame Flambart took off her jacket and hat, turned up her cuffs, and said,—

"We must have some water — where is the water?"

"Madame, here are two watering-pots full, to begin with, and when you want more the well is not two steps from here."

"That's all right. Now, my good man, be off with you! I don't like any one to watch me working, it bothers me. If I need you, I will call you."

Father Matois bowed and went off, but did not go out of sight of these new masons.

The Widow Flambart did not wish any one to watch her while she was working, because she did not know where to begin or what she ought to do. She examined the rubble, and said to Aglaé,—

"Let us first place some of these carefully one on the other; then we'll stick them together with mortar; that's the way, isn't it, Aglaé?"

"I think so, madame; but I don't know anything about that trade."

"Let's see, bother take it! these stones are heavy to handle. Ow! one of them has fallen on my foot."

"You will surely hurt yourself, madame."

"Pshaw! I have the courage of a man. Come, Aglaé, bring me some rubble."

"Here you are, madame."

"And take care of my feet."

"If I had a wheelbarrow, I could bring more of them at a time."

"You will go just now and ask for one; but,

first of all, we must make some mortar to stick it all together."

"Here is the hod, madame."

"What must we put in it first?"

"The water, I think, madame."

"No, it must be the plaster—the cement. Bring a bag of it here."

"Oh, how heavy it is."

"Pour quite a lot in; this is very interesting—this mason work. I like it."

"So much the better for you, madame."

"But I've noticed that masons always sing at their work."

"That is true, madame."

"Let us sing, then. Aglaé, do you know a round?"

"Mercy! no, madame!"

"Oh, I remember, at the Opéra-Comique in the piece entitled, 'The Mason.' Yes, this is it—the tune comes back to me,—

Let us hurry, let us work!
And earn our money well;
Workman, you must never shirk,—
Let us hurry, let us work!"

Well, Aglaé, are you going to leave me to sing all alone?"

"I don't know that tune, madame!"

"Then pour me some water."

"Here it is."

"Some cement."

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Here it is, madame."
Some more water."
Here you are, madame."
Now, some more plaster, I have watered it but it doesn't stick."
Oh, madame, cement doesn't stick at once, it time; you must let it be for a while."
I understand; I am too quick. But I have masons move it about with their hands."
With the trowel, madame."
Yes, but this one is broken. Go and ask for her."
glaé ran towards the house; Madame Flam- looked at her cement for some time, then she n to knead it with her hands.
Plaster whitens the skin," she said, " I am orry to have an occasion for trying it, it will away the freckles I have on my hands; I put both of them into it."
nd Madame Flambart left both her hands in mortar and forgot to stir it. But the cement, h had received very little water, suddenly be- stiff, and the mason, leaning over the hod, to herself,—
Why, how funny, it's squeezing my fingers. y, it's squeezing my whole hand. Good heav- ! I can't take them out, my hands are im- ed. Hallo, Aglaé, peasant! Somebody come release me, quick! both my hands are stuck his hod."

Nobody came, because Frédéric of set purpose held back the peasant and his wife, and La Brie was talking to Aglaé, who was in no hurry to return to the mason work. Madame Flambart's situation was very disagreeable. She was obliged to remain as she was before the hod, which she could not raise because it was too heavy; besides, she was afraid of hurting herself if she tried to raise it. As time passed the cement became harder. She called, she shouted and remained in this plight for nearly five minutes.

At last Father Matois arrived, then Aglaé.

"This is horrible, monsieur, for you to leave me with my hands caught in this hod — I called — I shouted, and no one answered me."

"Pardon me, madame, but I could not suspect —"

"Take me out of this, monsieur; take me out of it quickly!"

"Dang it! that isn't an easy matter; if I pull you out, I shall break your hands."

"Do you think I can stay glued to this hod? A hammer, monsieur, a hammer quick! so you may break the cement that binds my hands."

But Aglaé had already gone to ask for one. She presently brought another trowel, with which they managed to break the mortar and deliver the Widow Flambart from the disagreeable gloves she had given herself.

Directly she was free, this lady kicked the hod

er, put on her hat again and her jacket, pulled wn her cuffs, and exclaimed,—

"Come, Aglaé, follow me, let us go —"

"What, madame, you are going?" said Father atois, "and what about my wall?"

"Don't bother me about your wall — I've had ough of the mason's trade; to get my hands ick like that! They won't catch me playing the son again — and working in cement."

Madame Flambart returned to the château, ere she related her misadventure, which made younger women laugh very heartily; they made of her instead of pitying her.

But the next day two other peasants, schooled Frédéric, presented themselves at the château, in search of a locksmith, the other of a wheelght; this time the villagers were rather sumrily refused. Césarine said to them,—

'We leave rough, heavy work to men, they suited for that. But of us must be asked only se things which require wit, shrewdness, talent, ll, tact, and imagination."

'Then, why did you have it drummed about t you would do for nothing everything we were the habit of getting done by men."

'Why were you stupid enough to believe rything that they drummed?"

This adventure had rather cooled the enthusi- of the Independents. After having boasted that y could replace men successfully, they felt vexed

to find that there were a good many things which they were unable to do, and they said among themselves, "After all, it is due to the education they gave us; if they had made us, when quite young, practice gymnastics and learn to climb ladders, we should now be capable of acting as firemen."

While waiting until they could agree upon the basis of their corporation, Madame Étoilé said one morning to the Independents,—

"Mesdames, instead of working incessantly at framing rules, which is no easy matter, it is a great deal more urgent that we should occupy ourselves in writing a journal, in which we could develop our new ideas concerning the position of woman; in it we could invite all those sharing our ideas to affiliate themselves with us, either by correspondence or by an ambassador. This journal would make us known all over Europe — perhaps even farther than that, no one knows — and I feel quite certain that we should soon have a great number of subscribers, which would bring us in some money, of which in all new enterprises one can never have too much — too often one has not enough."

This proposition was received with great applause.

"Yes, yes, we must establish a journal," came from all parts of the room.

"That idea came to me several days ago," said Madame Pantalon.

"I have thought of it for a long time past," said Madame Bouchetrou.

"I was going to propose it to you yesterday and then it slipped from my mind."

"I have wanted to mention it to you twenty times."

"And I, too."

"I also."

"Very good, ladies," said Paolina, sardonically. "You all have the same ideas as I have; I am really delighted to have met with you. You remind me of that individual who, on hearing Voltaire's works praised, said, 'A fine trick that! your Voltaire has written all my ideas.'"

"No sharp words," said Césarine. "Paolina, you were the first to propose to establish a journal; so all the honor is due to you. Let us occupy ourselves immediately in putting the idea into execution. Let us see, mesdames, it is quite understood in the first place that we shall all work on it?"

"Yes, yes, all of us."

"It will be a pleasure, besides."

"Will the journal appear daily?"

"Oh, no, that would involve too much work for us — it will be hebdomadal."

"What does that mean, pray?" demanded Madame Boulard.

"That means that it will appear once a week."

"Very well."

"Is it not necessary that each one of us should

say what subject she wishes to treat of, in order not to have several articles of a similar nature?"

"That is correct."

"Each one must choose a subject."

"We can write on everything, can't we?"

"Why, very nearly everything. Let us see, Madame Flambart, what subject will you treat?"

"I shall write on political subjects."

"Impossible, we cannot mention politics, or we shall have to give security, and that costs too much."

"Deuce take it! that is a pity; and I had so many good ideas that I could have given to several governments!"

"You can reserve them for another occasion, they will keep."

"If you forbid me politics, I shall write on marine subjects, I shall treat of fishing."

"And I shall write on hunting."

"I don't see what connection all that has with the society we wish to found. But no matter! Let us go on. How about you, Madame Grassouillet?"

"I shall write fashion articles."

"But there are already several fashion journals edited by women — that will only be a repetition."

"You are joking! one can never have too much of fashions to please women; in fact, they are indispensable."

"So be it; let us pass to the next. And how about you, Madame Vespuce?"

"I shall write a novel after the English style."

"Very good! And Madame Dutonneau?"

"I shall write on corpulence and how advantageous it is for a woman to become plump as she grows older."

"That is very questionable, madame," said the wiry Olympiade. "I assert, on the contrary, that a woman preserves her youth longer when she is thin and genteel than when she grows so round that her waist is entirely obliterated."

"I have often heard my husband say that flesh was preferable to bone, madame."

"A fig for your husband's opinion, madame! It seems to me it is very much out of place to cite those gentlemen's opinions here."

"Enough, mesdames, enough," cried Césarine. "Don't discuss the question further. One praises stoutness, the other thinness. Let us pass on."

Then each one of the Independents chose her specialty.

"I shall treat of music."

"And I of painting."

"And I," said Madame Boulard, "of the great progress which the hairdressers have made for some time past in the art of curling hair."

"Those things are all very futile, mesdames, and scarcely have any connection with the new ideas that we wish to put forth touching the capacities of our sex."

"We shall arrive there by a detour."

"Let us hope so."

"As for me, I can make the most superlative jams, and I shall give the recipes for them."

"My dear, let me beg you not to speak of jam, that is altogether too far from the question."

"I shall discuss the ridiculousness of those men who wear corsets."

"Very good that!"

"They would answer that you wear —"

"And if we do wear — unmentionable garments, we do so for modesty and decency's sake; while the men who put on corsets do it out of pure vanity and to try to make their waistcoats flatter."

"They say there are some men who wear rouge."

"Impossible! where could they wear it?"

"Not on their noses, I presume, but on their cheeks, to give them a fresh color."

"Why don't they put on patches like the marquises of former times?"

"Mesdames, that seems to me apocryphal; I have seen men who had fine colors and they would have preferred to be pale, as being more distinguished; besides, men do not care about having fresh complexions."

"Before going further permit me to say to our honorable commander that we ought to reflect what title we shall give our journal; that is a very important matter."

"Yes, for the success of a publication often depends upon the title."

"Don't be alarmed, ladies, one will not be lacking to us."

"But yet we must choose one which corresponds with our object."

"That is true; I am of the opinion that we should decide on a title forthwith."

"Yes, let us try to find one that is both attractive and witty."

"You need not look far," said Widow Flambart, "we must call it, 'The Independents' Journal.'"

"Hum — that is very dry, and will give rise to many conjectures. I should like something else better."

"Let us call it 'The Feminine,' that's very pleasing."

"Yes, but it does not say enough."

"'The New Crusade.'"

"People will think it is a religious journal."

"'The Journal of the Fair Sex?'"

"In a title one must avoid speaking of sex."

"But, in the first place, what color shall the cover of this journal be?"

"That is a very important matter; one attracts people first by means of the eye, we must give our journal a pleasing and attractive cover."

"Mesdames, we must have a yellow cover."

"What are you thinking of? these gentlemen would take that for a confession."

"What about red?"

"Oh, you see that everywhere, it's like musk roses."

"Blue, then?"

"There are some blue ones already.

"Chocolate?"

"That is too sober."

"Lemon, then, that's brilliant, that is?"

"Yes, not bad; a lemon cover is perhaps agreeable to the eye — it's rather dainty. It verges a little on the yellow, but, after all, it isn't bad. Ladies, the lemon cover is adopted."

"Yes, yes, vote for the lemon."

"As for me," said Madame Grassouillet, "I should have preferred apricot."

"No, lemon is much better."

"Adopted. Lemon is adopted."

"Well, that's one thing settled; now, the only thing we haven't got is a title. But it will perhaps be better to think of that at our leisure and to give ourselves time, in order that we may fix upon a good one. As that will not prevent our writing the articles that we intend for our journal, I propose to adjourn the meeting, that we may get to work upon them."

"Allow me to remark, Madame Pantalon, that in articles written for a journal one often has occasion to quote the title of the periodical, and, consequently, it will be inconvenient not to know it."

"That is correct, the last speaker is right; and then a title helps one sometimes to know what one

ought to write, one can turn and twist it and often get some very taking expressions."

"Then, mesdames, let us fix on a title, let us try to decide."

"What if we were to call it simply, the 'Lemon Journal'?"

"Oh, no, perhaps they would say people could only read it with oysters."

"Let us call it the 'Regenerator.'"

"It sounds like the name of a cosmetic."

"Let us give it a comic title, let us call it 'The Blunder.'"

"That title might suit a good many journals, it must not be ours; we should turn ourselves into ridicule."

"Mesdames," said Paolina, "I have one that will suit you, an original, striking title—one which promises a good deal and is not at all deceptive."

"Let us hear this marvellous title."

"The 'Ear-Piercer.'"

The ladies looked at each other, shook their heads, then murmured,—

"That's droll enough."

"We could find something better than that."

"That is no great thing."

"Why, yes, on the contrary it is very promising."

"Yes, the title is original; that is the principal thing."

"Why not the 'Ear-Pincher,' rather than the 'Ear-Piercer'?"

away another as a new love causes the old one to be forgotten.

Elvina was the only one who declared that she had no intention of working on the lemon journal.

"And why will you not write an article?" said Césarine. "Big or little, it is all the same, in fact, the shortest are often the best, and have the most chance of being read through. Why will you not bring your stone to the edifice we are constructing?"

"Why, sister, I feel that I have not the talent to write anything that will be worth the trouble of printing, and in order to write for a journal, it seems to me, one must have a great deal, oh, an immense amount of wit."

"My dearest, you exaggerate; wit certainly never comes amiss; but it is not absolutely indispensable, and I could cite a certain great journalist who never puts any in his articles, probably because he is afraid of using it. However, do as you please. When you see the 'Ear-Piercer' in everybody's hands, when you hear its articles praised, I venture to wager that you will wish that it contained some of your prose or verse."

"Are you going to have verses in it?"

"Of course, everything that other journals have."

For three days the Independents appeared to be deeply occupied, and consulted much among themselves. The captain was greatly perplexed; he scarcely saw the ladies except at mealtimes, and

even then they were much less talkative. The old sailor did not approve this, and he said to his niece,—

"What the devil are you thinking of—you and your friends? You don't talk or laugh or dispute as you used. You seem to have something on your minds that I am not aware of. What has happened to you? Women who don't talk — why the thing is quite unnatural. There's something extraordinary under all this."

"Well, uncle, the reason of our preoccupation is that we are about to issue a journal."

"A journal! What for? aren't there enough of them already?"

"We are going to publish a journal to spread abroad our ideas, propagate our principles; in fact, to give light to the women who are still blind."

"If you make a journal for blind women, they won't be able to read it."

"A figure of speech, uncle! When we say show light to anyone, we mean open their minds."

"But when they have no minds, what can you open then?"

"One can enlarge their ideas and clear their understanding. Tomorrow each one will bring her article. I shall put them together and have the 'Ear-Piercer' printed at Noyon, where it will cost less than at Paris; later on, M. Fouillac will undertake to find some one in Paris who will sell it and circulate it everywhere."

"What are you going to call your periodical?" inquired the captain.

"The 'Ear-Piercer.'"

"Are you going to give premiums?"

"Oh, no, uncle, they give them so much now, it has become too common — we shall promise them, but we shall not give them, that will show a great deal more wit."

Upon the day fixed for the editing of the journal, the ladies assembled at noon in the large hall which they had adopted for their deliberations. Césarine placed herself at a long table loaded with the necessary writing materials; then, when all were seated, she rang a bell, upon which an ominous silence ensued, and she began,—

"Madame Étoilé, as you were the first to suggest the establishment of the journal, it is for you to begin. Will you have the goodness to read your article to us?"

"Oh, I'm not in any hurry," answered Paolina. "Besides, as head of the Independents, I really think it is you who are entitled to the honors, Madame Pantalon."

"Me? I don't see the necessity of reading to you what I have written, mesdames," answered Césarine coldly; "in the first place it is rather long, and in the second, even if my article should not please you I am fully determined not to change it; consequently, if you read it in print that will be quite sufficient for all intents and purposes."

After the reading of these two articles their authors looked at each other like two china dogs.

Dainty Madame Vespuce took a manuscript out of her bag, and rose and said, in a voice that was full of feeling,—

"Mesdames, I have written my romance, and it will be very agreeable to me if you will consent to hear me read it."

"What do you mean by that? Why, nothing will please us better. But will it not tire you to read it?"

"On the contrary, it will afford me pleasure, for I shall then see the impression my work produces upon you, and afterwards your criticism will be welcome — I only ask that you be quite sincere. Don't spare me! be frank — your precious counsels shall guide me."

"Read, my dear madame, we will listen to you with the greatest attention, and will be careful not to interrupt you. You hear, ladies, interruptions are forbidden."

"We will be careful to obey."

CHAPTER VIII

Madame Vespuce's Novel and How She Read it Without Interruption

The new literary woman unrolled her manuscript with a little flourish; she turned over the leaves, and looked at it with something of the love of a tender father lost in admiration of his child. Beside her was the traditional glass of sugared water with which she was to moisten her lips. There are authors who prefer a glass of Bordeaux wine. I even knew one who would never read without having near him a bottle of champagne of which he often drank the entire contents, sometimes it did not suffice him and he would even demand a second. They gave him all he asked for, because he had a great deal of talent, and his work nearly always obtained a great success.

But let us return to Madame Vespuce, who, before reading her romance, thought fit to formulate a short preface, and said in a very earnest voice,—

"Mesdames, I claim your kindest indulgence in advance. I am but a novice in this career. I am not, like Madame Étoilé, accustomed to writing; I merely followed my inspiration, and I believe

that I ought to tell you beforehand that my novel is all heart, all feeling, all passion."

"We shall easily see, as Alceste said," answered Césarine, smiling. "Calm your emotion, dear Independent, you are before your peers. We listen to the reading of your novel, not to judge it — but because you desire that we should do so."

"Yes, I do wish it; I shall welcome your advice, your opinions, I shall be happy to follow them."

"Will she not soon have done her foreword?" said Madame Grassouillet in a low tone to one of her neighbors.

"She wishes to prepare us gently for what is coming; it seems that what she is going to read to us will move us greatly."

"We must be on our guard, then."

"Madame, I begin. My novel will have for its title, 'The deceptions of a too sensitive heart, or the fatal effect of jealousy when this feeling is carried to the last extreme!'"

"Bravo! a splendid title!" said Madame Étoilé.

"Why, I think it is a little long," said Madame Dutonneau.

"That will be more effective on the cover of a book."

"There would not be room for it on the cover of a book, unless it was printed in very small characters."

During this discussion, Madame Vespuce had melted the lump of sugar in her glass of water.

When the conversation ended, she looked around her to see if they were listening and, instead of reading, began another preamble.

"My heroine is a young princess who had been carefully reared by an old peasant who, as her sole fortune, possessed but one cow, who had never known her parents —"

"Excuse me, but was it the cow or the princess who had never known her parents?"

"Ah, Madame Flambart, can you put such a question as that to me? It is quite evident that the princess is in question."

"Why, no, your sentences are so involved; and I like to be sure about my personages."

"My heroine is called Fleur-d'Acacia, and my hero Coquelicot-Bleu."

"Very pretty, excessively pretty!"

"Delightful names!"

"Everybody should call their children by such names as those."

"Of course they should; instead of Marie-Adèle or Théodore, which are exceedingly common names. It would be a hundred times more agreeable to say, 'Come and kiss me, Fleur-d'Acacia.[1] Have you thoroughly learned your lesson, Coquelicot-Bleu?[2] Have you a pain in your stomach, Bouton de Rose?[3]' and so forth and so on."

[1] Acacia-Flower. [2] Blue corn poppy. [3] Rosebud.

"There are so many plants that could be personified."

"The whole calendar would have to be revised."

"We will occupy ourselves with that later on."

"Very well; but, when we are about the calendar, we must not forget to lengthen the months, that is very important."

"Olympiade is right; months of thirty days are not long enough."

"No, we must have a month of forty days, at least."

"Yes, at least; and we must have fifteen of them in the year."

"Fifteen in the year; that is not enough—put it at eighteen. You see, at that rate one would grow old much less quickly."

"Naturally, a woman who is thirty today would then be only twenty."

"That is quite correct; this reform will be one of the first to be registered in our new social code."

"A thousand pardons, dear Madame Vespuce, it was the pretty names of your hero and heroine that made us interrupt you. We will say nothing more."

"We will try not to, at least."

"Go on."

"For my villain I could think of nothing better than Raoul Barbarousse de Croquamort."

"Croquamort is more than pleasing," said Madame Étoilé.

"It's a difficult name to pronounce; I am afraid it will oftener be read Croquemort."

"So much the worse for those who do not know how to read. We must not bother ourselves about these little details. Thus, I once heard some one read in company a story entitled 'le merle Blanc.'[1] The heroine brought up this bird, which she loved dearly, she addressed him in the tenderest words, and kept saying to him, 'Come to me, pretty merle, merle, merle.' Well, the reader's pronunciation was so bad that when she said 'merle, merle, merle,' it sounded quite like something else and produced a very disagreeable effect; but, do you think that the author should change the expressions he uses in writing on that account? Not at all, one would never have done if it were necessary to consult the taste of each one and fear that someone may mispronounce the names of one's characters."

"A thousand excuses again, Madame Vespuce! This time it is quite understood that we must not interrupt you again."

"Then, mesdames, I will begin,—

It was midnight, and everything was sleeping in the virgin forest, which extended from the Alps as far as Mont Cenis—"

"Excuse me—a simple observation; I don't think that the Alps extend so far as that—"

"And then it is not a virgin forest; for a long

[1] The white crow.

time past, people have crossed the Alps. Travellers are often met there, and sometimes bears."

"Good heavens! mesdames, are you going to cavil about such a little thing as that? How do you think I can give my romance color, make it poetical? We say virgin forest because that sounds well in a description. As for that, I made a mistake in my manuscript, we are not in the Alps, but in a dense forest in Hungary, in the neighborhood of Mongatz. My story begins in the time of the famous Count Tékéli, who fought against the troops of the Emperor of Germany. You know that now, in order that a theatre may be successful, it must have music; without it, indeed, there is no hope of success; while with an orchestra, singing, noise — in fact music, or anything that resembles it, you may commit the greatest blunders in your staging of the play, and put the stupidest speeches into the mouths of your actors. Everything will pass muster, if you only have an accompaniment. You may choose the very strangest of subjects, mingle princes with bakers' journeymen, personages of the time of Louis XIII with the cocottes and roystering blades of today; have a love scene between the Duc de Richelieu and Asphasia; put François I at the feet of Sophie Arnould, and it will all pass if all these people are singing, shouting, trilling and quavering, especially, if they finish their final chorus by dancing the cancan."

"Oh, that romantic, extravagant dance which always delights and rouses the public. Can you not imagine, mesdames, with what impatience the good public, the literate public, awaited that dance of which it never fails to demand a repetition; that dance which enraptures them, delights them, upsets them, and makes them shake and tremble in unison with its measure, on the benches of the orchestra and pit? On the first day — people are awaiting it, in fact — the public, yielding to its entrancement, its enthusiasm, is unable to contain itself; the people jump on the stage, invade the boards, and, mingling with the actors, finish with them the bacchanalian dance which terminates the act. Ah, that will be a very proud day for dramatic art, and men of letters expect it with the keenest impatience!"

"Have you done, Madame Étoilé?"

"I have done if you wish it, for I have still many things to say on the changes that are taking place in the theatre, and I am planning a very striking work on that subject; I shall entitle it: 'The influence of the pipe, beer and absinthe, and the cafés-concerts on the spectators at spectacles, and of more —'"

"Should we not listen to Madame Vespuce's novel, first of all?"

Little Madame Vespuce had drunk the glass of sweetened water while Madame Étoile was perorating, and was on the point of deciding to prepare

a second one. But they were silent, and she resumed her manuscript.

"Everything was sleeping in the virgin forest which extended as far as the Alps —

"No, I meant to say Hungary. I was thinking that perhaps I had better put my thick forest in Bohemia."

"Pray continue; the country matters little provided the forest be dense enough."

"Listen to this description,—

There were venerable trees, the branches of which, closely interlaced, formed a dome that was impenetrable by the rays of the sun. These vigorous trees were sometimes so close one to the other that it was impossible to take two steps without bumping the nose or some other part of the person. The earth was covered with moss and ground-ivy, and with dead leaves, which formed a natural carpet. When the wind blew hard under these old half-dead trees —"

"Pardon, my dear lady, but you said just now that these trees were vigorous, so they could not have been half dead."

"It occurs to me, madame, that in a dense forest there might very well be both vigorous and half-dead trees."

"Madame Vespuce is perfectly right. As for that, it is the same with people as it is in the forest: the latter contain healthy trees, decaying trees and dead ones — and so it is in society."

"Allow me to say, Madame Pantalon, that in

society we do assuredly sometimes meet people who are not well, who in fact are far from it, but I don't think I have ever played whist or boston with one who no longer existed."

"As for me," said Madame Dutonneau laughing, "I have often played whist with a dummy."

"Why, that's a pun[1] — Madame Dutonneau has made a play on words."

"Ha, ha, ha! a very good pun too."

"I also have often played whist with a dummy, and it is infinitely more amusing than to play it with four people."

"Do you think so?"

"Oh, there is no comparison."

"I," said Madame Flambart, "once played whist with a Scotchman, who was said to be a very fine player."

"Was he a Scotch mountaineer?"

"Yes, for he was a Highlander, which means an inhabitant of the mountains — "

"Did he wear the national costume of his country?"

"My faith, I did not notice!"

"However the Scotch national costume is so striking as to be noticed immediately."

"Yes, yes, he did wear it, as I now remember, it quite shocked me when I first saw him before we sat down to play. But this Highlander had a singular manner of playing whist, he cut in one

[1] The word mort, dead, is also used for our word dummy.

color, and a few minutes afterward we perceived that he had cards of the color he had cut."

"Ah, then he was not a Scotchman, he was nothing but a card sharper — a blackleg."

"All I know is, that they put him out of the drawing-room, into which he had introduced himself."

"It seems to me, ladies, to be high time that we should return to the dense forest which Madame Vespuce has so admirably described."

"Oh, yes, please, Madame Vespuce, do continue the reading of your delightful romance; it has given us so much pleasure."

"It has given them so much pleasure," said Césarine, in a low tone, leaning towards her neighbor; "and they have not listened to it. Fortunately poor little Vespuce is possessed of much patience. In her place I should long ago have thrust my manuscript into my pocket."

Madame Vespuce resumed,—

"Where the wind blows hard under the old trees of the forest it snaps off branches, overturns and uproots the tallest poplars. It was such a moment as this that the gloomy and stern Raoul Barbarousse de Croquamort chose for his walk. This caitiff nobleman was of gigantic height — six feet and several inches, and he was frightfully thin. His hollow, livid cheeks, his bald and glistening forehead, his teeth, long and sharp as those of a wild boar, gave him a repulsive appearance. His long, thin nose resembled the point of a lance; his peaked chin threatened his nose; his mouth was a gulf which, when he opened it, extended to his ears; finally, his sea-green eyes added the finishing touch to his frightful countenance.

Croquamort, after taking several steps in the forest, suddenly stopped, muttering in a dull voice; 'The confusion of nature tallies well with that in my breast.' Then, striking his forehead as though some sudden idea had cleared his memory, he resumed his walk, thrusting aside with his long sword the obstacles in his pathway, and at length reached the entrance to a grotto, into which he immediately penetrated.

It was an immense grotto, formed by rocks, or which, rather, was the result of some trembling of the earth, of some cataclysm which in overturning this part of the globe had put beneath those things which had formerly been above. Thus, in the interstices of the rocks which formed the ceilings of these gloomy caverns, flowers were peeping forth, now of a beautiful green, now puny and stunted. Who would have thought that in the anfractures of the rocks, in nooks where the sun had never penetrated, one would find rhododendrons, heath, mimosas, crocuses, jasmine, Chinese primroses, and laurel-thyme?"

"Good heavens! Madame Vespuce, you must have taken a course in botany."

"No, madame, I read that somewhere in an old book, and I said to myself, 'It seems to me that will do very well for my grotto,' and I made use of it. Is that kind of work not allowable, madame?"

"Pardon me, my dear madame, not only is it permissible to quote from an old book, but there are some writers who boldly dare to pilfer from the works of their living contemporaries, and without deigning to say from what source they have taken the material they use. Will you not resume your reading, which we will be careful not to interrupt?"

"In this grotto one walked on ferns and an infinitude of other plants, which I cannot enumerate to you by name at this moment.

Raoul Barbarousse de Croquamort, after looking about him for some time, directed his steps towards an opening which he perceived at the end of the grotto and which served as the entrance to another cavern, much larger and more extensive than the first, but dark, cold and gloomy. This second grotto, far from being carpeted with verdure, was the haunt of owls and bats and of monstrous spiders."

"Good heavens! is she never going to come out of her grottoes?" said Amandine, in a low voice, "I am beginning to experience an uneasiness in my legs."

"I can't refrain from yawning; but, really, this lady abuses our patience with her grottoes."

"Hush! why don't you, down there?" said Césarine, "what is the matter with you, mesdames, that you must whisper like that?"

"Madame was telling me that she had seen a grotto at Ermenonville, near Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Hermitage, but that it was not at all like those in Madame Vespuce's romance."

"Oh, have you been to Ermenonville, madame? Is it not a delightful place? Jean-Jacques chose his retreat well."

"He did, indeed; but what astonished me was that he should have had the idea of taking his life."

"What are you talking about? Why, Jean-Jacques Rousseau did not kill himself; he died of apoplexy."

"Undeceive yourself, madame; the great phil-

osopher was not, it would seem, sufficiently philosophical to be able to support a misfortune which so many husbands accept without a murmur. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, having acquired proof that Thérèse, the woman he had raised to his level, had been faithless to him with one, I dare not say whom; in fact, the man of nature who ought, more than any one else, to have closed his eyes to the frailties of humanity, could not support the thought of being — what you know well. His brain became crazed in that little cottage in which he dwelt, and which may still be seen not far from the Ile des Peupliers, where his tomb now is. This, at least, is what I was told by one who asserted that he was quite certain of what he advanced."

"No, madame, I cannot accept that version; I do not wish to believe that the man who has written such admirable things finished his career so badly. Incessantly surrounded by enemies, he imagined that they wanted to kill him, so he fled from the world and withdrew from all observation. But, for all that, jealousy of his wife was far from his thought, and to commit suicide because his better half! — you are mistaken. Would Jean-Jacques have forgotten, do you suppose, that Lucullus, Cæsar, Pompey, Antony, Cato, and many other great men were perfectly aware of their betrayal without making any noise about it? There was but one fool, Lépidus, who died of despair.

Frankly speaking, Jean-Jacques could not have wished to resemble Lépidus."

All the Independents applauded, shouting,—

"Hurrah for Madame Pantalon!"

Madame Vespuce profited by this interruption to attack her second glass of sugared water.

"Pardon, my dear lady," resumed Césarine, "the remembrance of Jean-Jacques made us forget you for a moment, but you will forgive us; there are so few great men now that it is necessary to fall back on those who are no more."

"I was, I think, in the second grotto."

"No, no, you had done with that."

"Then I was where my charming shepherd, Coquelicot-Bleu, in his turn, reached the forest."

"He was a shepherd, then?"

"Yes, yes, a shepherd after the genius of Apollo when he led the flocks of Admetus, King of Thessaly, to pasture."

"On Mount Hymettus."

"No, on Mount Ida."

"I beg your pardon, it was on Mount Hymettus."

"You are mistaken, madame; Mount Hymettus is a mountain in Attica, which is celebrated for the quantity and excellence of the honey which is gathered there."

"Madame, no one ever guarded flocks on Mount Ida."

"Good Lord, mesdames, what does it matter to

us whether it be on Mount Hymettus or on Mount Ida that Apollo kept sheep? If it were to Montmartre that this seductive god led Admetus' flocks, would that help your romance along?"

"Not in the slightest!"

"Well then, don't let us occupy ourselves any longer with Apollo."

"Tell us about Coquelicot-Bleu?"

"He was a fine young man of twenty-five and wore a kind of short breeches made of buffalo skin, which left his legs uncovered—"

"Like bathing tights."

"Exactly—

His body was enveloped in a sheep or lamb's skin, under which he hid his cross and the foreign orders with which he was decorated."

"What! your shepherd was decorated?"

"He was only disguised as a shepherd—

His mantle, which he wore simply attached to his left shoulder, was the skin of a tiger he had vanquished."

"He was covered with skins, then, this shepherd?"

"Probably he had gloves also—of rabbit skin."

"No, he had no gloves, but he had a fine poniard with a Toledo blade—

Coquelicot had a pretty figure, was well-made, his face was noble and attractive, his mouth disclosed forty teeth, perfectly even, and so white that they looked like china."

"Forty teeth! but people don't usually have so many; I thought thirty-two was the maximum!"

"Madame, in a story a person may give her hero a few more teeth than ordinary people possess."

"Oh, certainly, it was simply a remark I made."

"Coquelicot had hair as black as ebony and he wore a queue, that he might bring them back into fashion. This charming young man had a noble forehead and a nose slightly turned up at the end."

"Oh, madame, what a pity! Do, please, change that."

"Change what?"

"Don't give your lover a turned-up nose. That is impossible. In the first place, a man with a turned-up nose never inspires love, passion, sentiment. The turned-up nose has something comical about it. Something that invites jeers and badinage and laughter; but it does not make you sigh. The men with Greek noses, straight noses, are the passionate men; aquiline noses are capable of love also, but with them it is mingled with reflection, meditation, they are crafty, and one should rarely trust what they say."

"It seems to me, madame, that you have studied the nose profoundly."

"As a matter of fact, madame, when I first cast my eyes on a snub-nosed man, or one who has his nose turned up at the end, I cannot help recalling the explanation which Rabelais gave on this part of the face."

"Have you read Rabelais, madame? I thought ladies could not read that author."

"An error, madame, a great error."

"And what did Rabelais say on the subject of turned-up noses?"

"He said, madame, that the person whose nose was of this description had nursed from a fount that was hard and firm, and that those with straight, long noses had drawn their nourishment from a soft and tender breast."

"That is a definition quite worthy of Rabelais."

"Well, since Coquelicot-Bleu's nose displeases you so much, I will give him an aquiline nose."

"Your novel will gain a hundred per cent thereby."

"The handsome Coquelicot-Bleu took his way towards the grotto; but, before entering, he stopped for a long time to look about him, for he hoped to find her for whom he would give his life, the young and candid Fleur-d'Acacia; but she was not there, and the savage Croquamort, hid in the second grotto, could watch and spy on everything that his rival did, with the utmost ease.—

"I don't think I have told you that this caitiff lord was also in love with Fleur-d'Acacia, and that, consequently, he was Coquelicot-Bleu's rival, and had sworn mortal hatred to the latter, but I presume you have guessed it.—

Presently, they heard the sweet and harmonious sounds of a tambourine; it was Fleur-d'Acacia who came, singing and dancing. She had barely entered the grotto when Coquelicot-Bleu was at her feet, gazing lovingly at her. The young girl was well worth contemplating; she was thin, slim, light, her waist could have been confined in the bounds of a curtain ring.

Her eyes were blue, her hair like silk; she had such a tiny, tiny mouth, that it was as much as she could do to put her finger in it."

"Then how did she manage about her fork?"

"Your question is too realistic, Should the heroine of a romance be submitted to such details? Has she any need of a fork? does she live like everybody else? does she think of eating?

Coquelicot-Bleu was at the feet of the beautiful young girl declaring to her that he loved her, and swearing that he should never change. Fleur-d'Acacia was greatly moved; but Croquamort, who had seen all this from the place where he was hidden, immediately took from his belt a revolver with eight chambers, four of which he discharged at Coquelicot-Bleu, who, at the first shot, rolled into the dust."

"Oh, what a pity! Coquelicot-Bleu is killed."

"How badly it ends."

"Why, wait, ladies, wait! it is not ended yet.

Fleur-d'Acacia fell fainting on her lover's body; Croquamort ran and took her up, carried her in his arms, left the grotto, regained his horse, and started off at a swift gallop.

Croquamort reached his château. He ordered his people to prepare a feast, and gave Fleur-d'Acacia into the care of an old cook. The old woman sprinkled the young girl with lavender water. Fleur-d'Acacia came to herself and cried, 'Give me death!' To which the old woman responded, 'No, I will give you an omelette and bacon, and that is all I can do towards the feast that monseigneur has ordered me to prepare; but as soon as it's light, I will put on the pot-au-feu.' It is needless to tell you that Fleur-d'Acacia wished for nothing. The next day Croquamort came to her and said,—

'I will give you three days to consent to marry me,' and the young girl answered him,—

'If you should give me three years, it would be exactly the same thing — I should refuse you.'

'That will make no difference to me; but I will give you three days.'

At the end of the three days, Croquamort, who had put on a costume that was glittering with false jewels, came to Fleur-d'Acacia and said to her,—

'Will you follow me to the chapel?'

'What for?'

'To become my wife.'

'But if I don't wish to?'

'Come, all the same; you may change your mind on the road; that is often seen. More than one young girl who had consented to marry has said no, instead of yes, when she was before the mayor. Why should not you do the contrary? One can never be sure of anything with women.'

They started towards the chapel, but, just as they were going in, a masked man hurled himself in front of Croquamort, and trod on his toes.

'I have trod on your toes!' cried he, 'and if you are not a coward, you will demand satisfaction of me and we will fight to the death!'

Croquamort answered,—

'I am not a coward, but I never fight except with people who have no desire to do so. You do desire to fight, therefore I will not fight with you! but I will have you thrown to the bottom of one of my dungeons. First, however, I must know who you are.'

He snatched off the mask which covered the face of the unknown, and recognized Coquelicot-Bleu."

"But he had been killed in the grotto."

"Probably he had not been killed.—

Fleur-d'Acacia uttered a cry of joy, Croquamort one of fury and Coquelicot-Bleu one of gladness. The latter took Fleur

d'Acacia in his arms and disappeared with her down a long gallery, with a door at the end ; he opened the door and saw before him a long, narrow, straight corridor, into which he plunged without reflection. The corridor led to a staircase ; he went down, counting the steps as he did so, and found there were seventy-two."

"And he still held his mistress in his arms?"

"Naturally."

"He must have been strong, but, all the same, it must have been difficult for him."

"At the foot of the staircase he found himself in front of another door ; he opened it —"

"The key was in the door then?"

"Good heavens, madame! as if any one can notice such details as those!

He opened the door, and perceived another staircase; he must go up this time; he went up."

"Poor fellow! an Auvergnat would not want to do that."

"He went up eighty stairs, then the fresh air struck his face and he found himself on the banks of a river. A boat with oars was there, our friends jumped into it, and rowed to a lonely place — they landed and Coquelicot-Bleu, drunk with love, was about to throw himself again at his mistress' feet when Croquamort, coming suddenly from behind a gooseberry bush, drew his long sword and passed it through his rival's body."

"Good heavens! Coquelicot-Bleu is certainly dead this time. What a pity!"

"Wait a bit —

Raoul Barbarousse de Croquamort again took Fleur-d'Acacia

off with him; but this time, instead of taking her to the chapel of his château, he took her to Italy, to the top of Mount Vesuvius, where he wished to marry her."

"What an idea — on Mount Vesuvius! but can any one be married on Mount Vesuvius?"

"People can do anything they wish there; one of our most witty and inimitable romancers is said to have dined there on the grass while the fiery lava rolled at a few steps from him.

Croquamort then, arrived at the foot of Mount Vesuvius with Fleur-d'Acacia, and by a refinement of cruelty he wished that the young girl should be dressed in the wedding finery of a young bride. The pair climbed the mountain; but, when they were nearing the crater, they saw before them a pilgrim, with a beard so thick that it quite hid his face. He stopped in front of Croquamort again and trod on his toes.

'You will fight this time, won't you?' he remarked, then pulled off his beard, and they recognized Coquelicot."

"He was not killed then?"

"Not a bit of it!

When he saw him the traitorous Croquamort shuddered, he fumbled at his belt in search of a weapon, but Coquelicot did not leave him time, he seized him, lifted him, and precipitated him into the smoking mouth of the volcano."

Madame Vespuce had at last finished reading her romance, which all the ladies praised and applauded, though they said in low tones to each other,—

"How delightful to think it is finished!"

"Oh, but there is more to follow," said Zénobie, "that is only the first part."

" More to follow," said Césarine, " why, it seems to me that is a difficult matter. Your romance is quite finished, since you have cast your villain into the crater of Vesuvius."

" On the contrary, that is what gives me a chance to begin again. In an eruption, the volcano may eject Croquamort on to the earth ; then, he will again attack the two lovers."

" Ah, I did not think of that ; in fact, it is very ingenious."

CHAPTER IX

A Challenge. An Invalid. A Military Promenade

After the lengthy reading of Madame Vespuce's thrilling romance, Madame Boulard gave utterance to her article on the progress that had been made in ladies' hairdressing; she set forth all the advantages of the chignon, and above all of the false chignon, which could be worn as large as one wished, and which might, in more than one circumstance, provide for the safety of those who wore it. The author had seen in the street a lady struck on the head by a falling chimney and who had not been hurt, thanks to her chignon, which had completely protected her.

Madame Grassouillet had written a fashion article in which she said that the small bonnets worn by the ladies were still too large. She asserted that woman would not be modishly dressed until she could thrust her bonnet into her corset, with another to change; in this way the bonnets would have a double use; when one wished to remain with the head bare, they could be left in that convenient receptacle, the corset.

Later on they heard articles on music, on paint-

ing, on song. The Widow Flambart treated of fishing and fish; she announced that she should pass them all in review from the gudgeon to the whale. But Césarine stopped her at the lobster, saying,—

"That is very good, but we have not time now to occupy ourselves with the rest."

"I intend to write a book," cried a young woman, "I don't know yet upon what subject, nor what title I shall give it, nor whether it will be gay or sad, historical or purely fanciful; but it is all the same; only, I want it talked about and announced beforehand, in order that no one may steal my plot."

"We will announce it when you know what you are going to write. Madame Étoilé, everybody has given her work, except this lady who does not know yet what she is going to do. It is your turn now, and we are impatient to hear you."

Paolina drew a manuscript from her travelling bag, spread it out, placed herself and said, before beginning to read,—

"I had our journal in mind, mesdames, and, consequently, I have written for our journal. I could have treated, like you, of a great many other subjects — it would even have been very agreeable to me to embrace them; but that would have been diverging from the aim of our association, and I therefore sacrificed my taste to my duty!"

"What a prologue!"

"What a preface!"

"Is she never going to finish?" said several of the ladies, among themselves.

At length the tenth muse took her manuscript and read,—

"For a long time past, the need of a journal—

"No, I have made a mistake, forgive me, it was stupid of me to say that — I will begin again,—

For a long time past, the need of a lemon journal has been felt in the literary world; rejoice, amiable readers of the feminine gender, to whom we offer this new publication, that this deficiency is about to be repaired. The lemon journal you so greatly desired — this lemon! — being here, have it always in your hands, on your settee, and on your bedside table; carry it to the play, even, you need not be ashamed of it. So that everywhere, in all places people may see the lemon journal, that its brilliant color may strike the eye, that people may say to each other, 'Are you a subscriber to the lemon journal? if you are not — to the lemon — to the "Ear-Piercer," ' say I; 'why that is the lemon journal — which — which— ' "

Madame Étoilé paused, shouts of laughter interrupted her reading; it was Madame Grassouillet who had given the signal for this fit of gayety.

The tenth muse put down her manuscript and glared at the pretty Amandine in a way that was anything but sweet, and said,—

"Will you kindly inform me, madame, what has provoked this gayety, which is, to say the least, ill-timed?"

"Good heavens! madame, it was you and your

lemons! To speak frankly, they cropped out so often in your article that they set my teeth on edge, and I should have had a nervous attack had I not preferred to laugh."

"Indeed, madame, I can easily understand that your teeth would be set on edge on hearing sensible matters read, serious matters, which are allied to common sense, in fact; I did not laugh at your article on little bonnets that you want to thrust into your corsets — but it excited my compassion for you."

"I am deeply distressed, madame, that my article should have awakened your compassion; however, it ought to please you, more than anyone I know of, to have something that you could put in your corset."

"Madame, you are an impertinent —"

"It was you, madame, who insulted me by saying that I understood nothing that was common sense."

"Yes, madame, and I repeat it; you are good for nothing but to talk about finery."

"That is much better than to weary everybody with pretentious phrases, with bathos, in fact."

"Bathos — bathos! that is too much! you shall give me satisfaction for this insult."

"You weary me — you are so dreadfully dull."

"Mesdames, pray collect yourselves."

"No, no, this cannot be passed over thus; I demand reparation."

"The fact is, you are greatly in need of repairs."

"Hold your tongue, you prudish humbug."

"You are not a prude, but you are a magpie, which is much worse."

"What a horrid woman! You shall give me satisfaction for that."

Madame Pantalon rose and went to place herself between the two antagonists, who were beginning to look at each other too closely, and said to them, in a severe tone,—

"No abuse, mesdames, that is no way for people of good birth, courageous women, to decide a quarrel. Since we are by way of showing that we are as good as men, why should we not fight duels like them? Paolina, Amandine, each of you choose your seconds, and they will settle between them the conditions of the combat and the choice of weapons, and tomorrow morning at eight o'clock you will meet in the little wood which adjoins the garden. I have spoken! The meeting is adjourned."

Césarine's words had quite calmed the anger of the heroines. However, Madame Grassouillet signed to Mesdames Vespuce and Boulard to follow her; while Madame Étoilé led off the Widow Flambart and Madame Dutonneau.

"Do you really want to fight?" said the frail Zénobie to Amandine, while Madame Boulard felt her chignon to see that it was in place.

"Why, I'm not absolutely set on it," answered

the pretty woman. "For the matter of that, if they oblige me to do so, I declare to you I shall fight with pistols only, I shall fire at five paces, and I shall fire first."

"But suppose that your adversary chooses the sword?"

"It is all the same to me; let her take the sword if she likes it better; as for me, I have told you my conditions and I shall not change them; I shall have a pistol — no, a revolver with six shots — I shall fire my shots one after the other, and then it will be her turn."

While one side was thus discussing, on the other, Madame Flambart said to Paolina,—

"What weapon shall you fight with?"

"The sword and no other, it is the gentleman's weapon. If they still used the lance I should have preferred that."

"But suppose your adversary wishes to fight with the pistol?"

"She has not the choice of arms, that belongs to me."

"Still — if she should?"

"I repeat to you I will fight only with the sword or lance, and I shan't go back from that. But if she will make an apology, I will accept it, because I have had time for reflection. That soldiers should fight with swords is right, that is their profession; that the bourgeois should fight with sticks, hair-dressers with combs, boxers with their fists, cats

with their claws, is very right; but writers should fight with their pens only. Everyone must do according to his profession."

The seconds met, and as it was impossible to come to an understanding, in order to regulate the combat, they went in search of Madame Pantalon and begged her to help them out of their embarrassment. Césarine, after listening to both parties, said to them,—

"I think neither of these ladies desires to fight. Tell them both, that they have confessed that they were wrong, and that the affair is settled."

Fouillac had helped Césarine to put in order the articles which were to compose the journal these ladies were about to launch upon the public.

The article written by Madame Pantalon of itself filled half the "Ear-Piercer," and should have assured its success, at least so thought the captain's niece, and Fouillac was entirely of her opinion. This gentleman later charged himself with the duty of going to get the journal printed at Noyon, then he was to repair to Paris to insert notices in the different newspapers of the approaching appearance of the "Ear-Piercer," a yellow journal edited by ladies who wished to enlighten their fellow citizenesses.

M. Fouillac warned the literary ladies in advance, that all this would cost a good deal of money, because announcements in the journals were very dear, above all if they wished to have as good ones

as those of the novelty shops, which often took an entire page of the paper.

"Yes, we certainly must be well announced," said Césarine. "What does it matter that it is costly, since we must have publicity and that will give us subscriptions. It will be money well invested, and will bring us in a good deal more. As for me, M. Fouillac, I put my cash-box at your disposal."

"And I too," said Madame Flambart, "I am not rich like Madame Pantalon, but I have some bank notes at the service of the journal."

"And you, mesdames?"

The other Independents declared that they were out of funds at that moment.

"But as our receipts will be large, you can keep back the portion which we should have given for expenses."

Fouillac left, furnished with bank notes, for the purpose of establishing and setting afoot this important matter in Paris.

Madame Pantalon invited her followers to set to work seriously on the second number of the journal, while their canvasser and agent — for that was the relation in which M. Fouillac stood to them — was engaged in puffing the first.

Now Frédéric, while all this was going on, having been successful in the affair of the mason, was looking about to find something else to give Madame Pantalon occupation, for he had not

established himself in Brétigny to remain inactive. One morning when all the company was breakfasting, Nanon came to inform the captain's niece that a man wanted to speak with her.

"A man?" said Césarine, "and what kind of a man?"

"Why, madame, I think he is the same kind as the others."

"But does he come from the village? Is he one of the peasants?"

"He doesn't belong to the village, or I should have recognized him. He's not quite a peasant and yet he's not a gentleman."

"If he comes in search of a carpenter or a mason send him off, we don't do that kind of business."

"Oh, no, madame, he doesn't want a workman — only, he's holding his hand to his stomach."

"He's holding his stomach?"

"Yes, madame, I noticed when I was speaking to him that he was holding his corporation."

"Well, what has that to do with us?"

"Mercy! he's asking for the château doctor."

"Then he is ill and has come to consult us."

"Yes, madame, that is it — he is ill."

"I must speak to him at once, then. Make him go into our assembly hall; I will be there in a moment."

"Are you taking upon yourself to cure sick people, niece?" demanded M. de Vabeaupont.

"Why not, uncle? I have studied herbs, I have

"No, no, we are not dentists; we can believe you from a distance."

However, the invalid approached Madame Dutonneau, opening his great mouth, and Armide thought it wise to make her retreat as did Madame Bouchetrou.

"I will give you something to put on your tooth," said Césarine. "That is all, I believe."

"Oh, no, madame, I have not yet told you of the worst of my troubles — I kept that for the end. Look you, madame, I have a very sore affliction — I don't know how to tell you that — it is very delicate to explain — I'm afraid I shall make you blush."

"Come, explain yourself; to a doctor one can tell everything — ought to tell everything — unless you do that, how can you expect to be cured?"

"You are right! but then you are not like other doctors."

"What does that matter, provided I can cure you?"

"Certainly, if you can cure me I shan't ask anything else. Then, that is settled — as I may tell everything I'll go straight to the point — and you engage to cure me?"

"Pray finish, monsieur."

"I'll do so. Well, then, madame, I've a lump on me, oh, a famous big lump, I think they call it a boil."

"A boil! why, good heavens! there's nothing

very bad about a boil; everybody knows what a boil is. And where is yours?"

"Why, that's the deuce of it — it's — it's, well, it's so bad that I cannot sit down."

"I will give you something to make a poultice, which you will place on the boil."

"Will you not have the kindness to apply it, madame?"

"No, indeed, I cannot charge myself with that duty. Why, nothing is easier than to place a poultice. Your friend Matois or his wife would render you this service."

"Oh, madame, 'tis an enormous boil, it is not like any other boil," and the gentleman appearing desirous of giving ocular evidence of the truth of his statement, Madame Flambart disappeared in her turn, exclaiming,—

"What a horrid man!"

But Césarine said to him in a severe tone,—

"Well, what are you going to do now? I will give you some simples for your colic, and some herbs for your poultice, you can put it where you like."

"Do you mean to say anyone can quite cure a sore without seeing it?"

"Enough! By Jove, you draw my patience to an end!"

"What a doctor! who swears! oh, well, if that's the way you care for sick people, thank you, it's hardly worth the trouble of putting one's self out

to come and see you! Keep your drugs and your herbs, I don't want them! I'll go and get cured by some one less delicate than you. Catch me putting any faith in your stories! you're only humbugging us with your remedies; I'll wager they'd give me the jaundice."

So saying, the supposed invalid took his stick, drew his hat down over his head, and departed.

"I shan't trouble to oblige these people," said Césarine to herself, "if this is the way they thank me. After all, the man was disgusting, and I am not sorry he has gone."

When Madame Pantalon returned to the dining-room, they asked news of her invalid.

"He's an insolent wretch," said Césarine, "he abused me because I would not look at his disgusting boil."

"You should have called Lundi-Gras," said the captain, "and I'll answer for it he would have made short work of the gentleman and his boil too. But these peasants will give you plenty of business if you undertake to cure them. They'll ask you for remedies which they won't take. Have you made any cures since you have been here?"

"I don't know, but I have several times sent prescriptions to sick people by Nanon."

"They didn't cure them at all, madame," said Nanon, who came in at that moment, "and Jean-Pierre's wife is below, she has come to ask if you can lend her a syringe for her husband, who is not

well; or, if you like, he can come and take the remedy here."

"Give him all the syringes in the château and let him leave us in peace."

"Mesdames," said the Widow Flambart, "these peasants do not respect us enough because they have not seen us in our military costumes, and all together, forming a little troop."

"That is true," said Amandine; "we have long talked of a march through the country with our rifles and our jackets, which are nearly all alike except a few buttons and some soutache more or less — but it is a uniform, all the same — and this march has never been accomplished."

"Well, mesdames, we must make it; you are right, it will impress these peasants. It's necessary to throw a little dust in the eyes of the populace."

"The weather is fine; I propose that we make this promenade today."

"Today, so be it."

"Shall we have a drum with us?"

"Certainly, it is really indispensable. Without a drum we might go all over the village and the neighborhood without attracting anybody's attention, and perhaps we should only be seen by three or four ploughmen; but the drum will be heard from afar and every one will come running to learn what it is."

"Unfortunately, we have no one to beat the drum but Nanon, and she does it very badly."

"Why, mercy! I only know how to beat the roll."

"If they only hear the rolling of the drum, they will think it is a military funeral that is passing. Suppose we take Lundi-Gras with us? he knows how to beat the drum."

"Oh, mesdames, no men with us! that would ruin the effect we ought to produce."

"Oh, I know some one who beats the drum very well," said Nanon, "and who knows how to do something else beside rolling."

"Who is that?"

"Hang it, it's Martine, the cook; she made fun of me more than once when I was learning the drum, and she took it and played some pieces on it that were magnificent. She beats the rural guard at it easily."

"Really, Martine knows how to beat the drum! Nanon go and fetch her quickly, and bring also the drum and drumsticks."

The cook came, followed by Nanon, who held the drum.

"Martine," said Madame Pantalon, "Nanon asserts that you know how to beat the drum very well; is that true?"

"Yes, madame, I'm a little rusty perhaps; but formerly I took lessons from one of my cousins who was a drummer in the rifles and, dang it, it went finely."

"Do you know anything else beside the roll?"

"I believe you! I know some marches, some retreats, some quicksteps."

"Let us see, Martine, take the drum and give us a sample of your talent."

The cook took the drum and drumsticks in a very offhand manner, and executed some rub-a-dubs in a way that delighted the ladies; there was one quickstep that almost made them jump out of their chairs. They were in transports, applauded her vigorously, and Césarine cried,—

"Bravo, Martine! you have a delightful talent for it, I did not suspect that I had a cook who was so good on the parchment. Was Lundi-Gras your professor?"

Martine shrugged her shoulders as she said,—

"Why, the idea! Thank God I had better instruction than his. Do you think I should ever have learned anything from that old cabin boy? Why, my cousin was very nice and the drum was his element."

"Martine, you will come out marching with us. I have an extra jacket that will fit you, and a lawyer's cap on which I will put a pompon; you will walk at our head, beating the drum; and you must play that quickstep that raised us all off our chairs just now."

"I should like nothing better than to go with you, madame; but, if I do so, who will get the dinner ready? Nanon does not know how to peel an onion."

"Dinner? Why Lundi-Gras will undertake the dinner. You are willing Lundi-Gras should get the dinner today, uncle, are you not?"

"Well, my dear, I've never tried him at it, and I confess I shall be curious to know how he will succeed."

"Then it is settled that Lundi-Gras shall get the dinner. Mesdames, we'll go and dress ourselves, and I will undertake to supply Martine with a drummer's costume."

CHAPTER X

Lundi-Gras as Cook. A Case to Defend

Preceded by the doughty Martine, whose costume and bearing were distinctly military, and who beat the drum as if she had served in the Old Guard, the little feminine troop left the château an hour later. The captain was at his window, with his cabin boy behind him, watching the departure of the Amazons.

"They look very nice," he remarked. "I think, thousand portholes! that they are really marching in step."

"Are those ladies going to fight, captain?"

"I should hope not."

"They have rifles."

"That is to let people see that they are in a state to defend us if anybody should attack us," answered the captain.

"Is any one going to besiege the château, then?"

"Hold your tongue, if you can't say anything more sensible than that. Go and busy yourself with your cooking, and try to give us something good — well-flavored; you know I don't like insipid ragouts."

"Yes, captain, you like dishes that make you thirsty. But who is going to help me? I can't peel the vegetables, put the fowls on the spit, and stir the sauces all at once."

"Take the gardener and Nanon with you."

"I'll take the gardener, but not Nanon, she would be dipping her fingers in all the sauces."

Lundi-Gras went in search of the gardener, to whom he said,—

"Father Flanquet, you must be my assistant; I've got to do the cooking, and you must help me."

"Help you to do the cooking? but I'm the gardener; I'm not a scullion."

"Well, and me? Am I a cook? But when the captain tells me to get the dinner, why, I'm going to get it; because I must, above everything, obey my captain, and if he should say to me, 'Bring me a porpoise,' I should go off at once in search of one; I don't know where I should find it, by the way, but I should go, all the same."

"Is it not enough that my daughter Nanon should help you?"

"I don't want your daughter, she does not listen to me; I tried to teach her to beat the drum, but she never learned how to beat anything but the roll, and that badly. They gave me authority to ask you to help me; come, Father Flanquet, bring me the best vegetables you have. I'm going down to the poultry yard to wring the necks of two or

three pullets; there are some eels and carp in the fish pond. Jingo, I'll get them up a feast fit for Belshazzar!"

Lundi-Gras killed several fowls and brought them into the kitchen, where he looked admiringly on a long row of saucepans of all sizes, and so well burnished and glittering that one could see one's self in their copper sides. He walked up to the ovens, which were numerous; then he stopped at the great chimney, in front of which several roasts could easily be cooked at the same time; for it must be confessed our ancestors understood how to do those things better than ourselves; they had fine kitchens, spacious and convenient, and immense chimneys where the spits would hold several pieces of game at once, and pastry ovens in which they might have cooked bread for a battalion. I fear that we have degenerated; we are more dainty, perhaps, more choice in our dishes, than our fathers; but, surely, we eat less.

Lundi-Gras enveloped himself in an apron, put a big knife in his belt, then he suddenly shouted,—

"A nightcap—I haven't a nightcap, a cook without a nightcap is like a gendarme without belts; I must run and get one. Father Flanquet always wears them, he must have a change—one that he's not wearing."

Lundi-Gras made the gardener lend him one of his nightcaps, and then ordered that worthy to take off his own and to put on his head in its place

a cap which he, Lundi-Gras, had covered with white paper, because a chief cook does not wish his assistant to be capped like himself. They proceeded to the kitchen. Lundi-Gras graciously permitted Nanon to come and light the fires for the ovens, and to make a big one in the fireplace. While the ovens were heating and Father Flanquet was peeling the vegetables, the new cook was walking about the kitchen cogitating.

"Where am I going to begin? I have so much to do that I don't know what to do first. In the first place, how many dishes shall I make them? Three roasts, a goose and two ducks; a stewed rabbit and a carp and eel stew; vegetables of the season, asparagus and little peas. For dessert a custard flavored with onions, that's good, that is! Father Flanquet, have you any fruit?"

"The cherries are beginning to yield, and the strawberries."

"You must give me some of both. Have you any cream cheese?"

"Nanon has some milk, and it's famous too! it is from our cow."

"Very well, we'll make it into cream."

"How can you do that? it's too thin."

"We'll put some flour in it, to make it thick."

"Must we pluck the goose and the ducks?"

"What a question! Have you ever seen a goose eaten with its feathers on? You might as well ask me if we must strip a rabbit of its skin."

"I thought the goose's feathers would burn off the creature when roasting."

"It is quite certain that at the fire the feathers would disappear. In fact, I believe you are right. That's quite an idea, that is. And it's not worth while to pluck these fowls. We'll put them on the spit just as they are. We will turn them often, and naturally the feathers will soon be burned. That will spare us some unnecessary work. And to say that Martine hadn't thought of that! These famous cooks never think at all. Well, I'll tell her about it, and in future I bet she won't pluck her fowls. Dash it, I was forgetting the soup. What soup shall I give them?"

"Some good cabbage," said the gardener; "that's the stuff."

"No, the captain doesn't like it."

"Well, some onion soup, that's dainty."

"No, Madame Pantalon dislikes it. Oh, some Julienne; they put all sorts of things in that, don't they?"

"Yes, all sorts of vegetables."

"They must put something else in — at Marseilles I've eaten fish soup and it was pretty good."

"Bah — fish in soup — were they fried?"

"No, they were cooked in the sauce, we have some gudgeon in the pond."

"There's some whitebait, and some soles."

"I don't care what they are. Go and fish, and bring me some good ones. Let me see in this

cupboard if Martine has everything that is necessary to season the stews. This is ordinary wine; hum! that smells good, that's madeira. This is —brandy; but that is not enough. I must have some kirsch, some rum, some rack, I don't want to do insipid cooking, I want it to have some taste, some spice. I want to outdo Martine. The cook has made a good deal of trouble for me, and I'm going to make her lower her tone. Let's go to the cellar, and I shan't spare the captain's spirits."

While Lundi-Gras was busied with the dinner, the little feminine troop was walking through the village and its neighborhood, announced by the drum, on which Martine beat different marches. The sound of this instrument awoke the attention of the villagers, they came running to see what troops were passing through their countryside, and uttered shouts of astonishment on seeing this little detachment of Amazons, of whom some were pretty, while others, not so favored by nature, had a very awkward air, with their guns which fatigued them and which they did not know how to hold. As they went along, the Independents heard such expressions as these,—

"Why, here's a masquerade!"

"No, these are jugglers, conjurors."

"Yes, and they are beating the drum to announce their spectacle."

"Why, no, don't you recognize that lady, who lives at the château, the captain's niece?"

"Oh, yes, it is Madame Pantalon who is corporal."

"Does she still want to nominate the rural guard?"

"Why, no, there's Father Farineux following behind; he belongs to the troop."

"Oh, what a good farce! just look at the silly things!"

"It's a new National Guard."

The rural guard had met the Amazons, and instead of being angry, had taken to march with them, shouting as he did so,—

"Mesdames, it is my duty to protect you. The mayor told me to accompany you, for fear you should be insulted, because the villagers might take you for Cossacks."

They had been obliged, perforce, to endure the company of the rural guard, which had greatly vexed the little troop. But presently Father Farineux was joined by all the urchins, all the children of the village who were able to walk; some of whom sang to accompany the drum, while the others whistled or imitated the cries of animals. Then Madame Pantalon had ordered the retreat, which was not easily accomplished, because the Amazons were preceded and surrounded by such a swarm of brats that the drummer, Martine, was often obliged to distribute slaps and kicks before she could advance.

"It seems to me that we don't make a very good

impression on the natives of the country," said Elvina, who walked in the second rank between Madame Boulard and Madame Flambart.

"It's because we don't keep in step," said the latter. "Madame Boulard, pay attention; you advance the right foot when you ought to advance the left."

"Oh, madame, it's not a question of my foot, it's my chignon which is coming off, I can feel that it is unfastened under my cap; I must pin it on."

"Madame, when one is under arms, one does not bother with one's chignon."

"I think you're joking with your 'under arms'! Who will lend me a hairpin? Martine, have you one?"

"Madame Boulard, will you leave our drummer alone? You'll put her out of tune."

"A hairpin, in the name of all that you hold most dear! all my costume for a hairpin!"

"Ah, good, here are some urchins singing as they march behind us,—

Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre,
Mironton, ton-ton, mirontaine."

"Are they singing that for us?" demanded Madame Grassouillet.

"Why, it really looks so to me."

"There they are whistling it, now! the little brats."

"I think we should do well to turn back now."

"In step, mesdames, in step, now!"

"I'm not out of step."

"My chignon's coming off."

"Good heavens, take it off at once and it will be done with."

"By the left flank, march!"

"Oh, if she talks to us about the flank I don't come out again at all."

The ladies re-entered the château fatigued, worried, and in a very bad humor, because they had heard certain remarks.

"These peasants are not yet well-informed enough to understand us," said Césarine.

"No," said Madame Étoilé, "it is necessary first to speak to the mind, it is by writings that one enlightens the masses! it is our journal which will open the way to our success."

"We will go and have some dinner while waiting, ladies, for we have great need of resting our energies, and the captain's speaking-trumpet is calling us."

"Oh, yes, don't let us keep him waiting—"

The Amazons went into the dining-room. The captain was in his place.

"Come, my young warriors," he said, "I've called you twice already. I'm very curious to try Lundi-Gras' cooking. Are you pleased with your walk?"

"Not altogether, uncle; all the children in the village wanted to accompany us, as well as the rural guard."

"That was an honor they rendered you."

"We could have dispensed with it."

"My dear, processions of any kind always produce an effect upon the men, and infinitely amuse the children."

"The best of our walk is that it has given us tremendous appetites."

"So much the better! Here is the soup, attention."

Lundi-Gras, in his cook's costume, placed the soup on the table, then he remained behind his master to see the effect it produced. After swallowing a spoonful, all the ladies exclaimed,—

"Good heavens! what is the matter with the soup?"

"What a singular taste!"

"It smells of rum!"

"And what do I find among these vegetables?—a little fish!"

"I've found a sausage."

"And I a gherkin."

"Look here, cabin boy, what soup have you served us?"

"It's a Julienne à la Marseillaise."

"But nothing is put in Julienne but the vegetables."

"Excuse me, captain, I put everything, it makes it more varied."

"But whence comes this taste of rum which accompanies it?"

"I know you like rum, captain, and so I put a little drop of it in the soup so it wouldn't be insipid."

The captain said nothing more, but none of the ladies could swallow this new kind of Julienne. Lundi-Gras replaced the soup with an immense dish of stewed fish which flamed like a snapdragon.

"There," said he, "I hope that will please all the company. I've set it on fire — it's a real sea dish."

They extinguished the fire, then the stew was served. Hardly had they carried a morsel of it to their lips than the ladies uttered a new exclamation.

"What is it now?" said the captain, who had not tasted it; "have you burned yourselves?"

"No, captain, it is not that; but no one can eat this; it fairly takes one's breath away."

"Taste it, uncle; I'll wager that you yourself cannot swallow it."

The captain took a little of the sauce and made a terrible grimace; however he forced himself to swallow it all, saying,—

"What did you put in this, Lundi-Gras?"

"Why, captain, fish; it's pure eel and pure carp."

"Yes, but what did you season it with?"

"Why, captain, I put onions, pepper, cayenne, wine; then some brandy and kirsch and rack — and confound it, if that isn't good, you are hard to please."

"Why, you idiot! you put too much in, altogether; I might manage to do with it, but for these ladies it is impossible."

"Heavens! I swallowed a little of it, and my palate is spoiled."

"The cayenne predominates a little, perhaps," said Lundi-Gras, "but that is very good for the stomach."

"Take away your stew," said the captain, "since these ladies cannot eat it. I confess, myself, that it needs a mouth well-seasoned to hot things to manage that gravy. See, you devil's cook, bring in your roasts; we must hope you haven't stuffed them with cayenne."

"Don't be alarmed about that, captain, I have not put the slightest thing in them. I serve them to you just as they came into the world."

The goose and the pair of ducks were placed on the table. The ladies, who had grown suspicious of Lundi-Gras' cooking, looked at his roasts, and thought them rather dark in color with a great many little black spots which are not usually seen on fowl.

"Your roasts are surely burned," said Césarine, "they've had more than a peep at the fire!"

"I assure you, captain, that these beasts are not burned at all."

"Well, they have been very badly plucked, they are covered with stalks of feathers."

"Ah, captain, it's because I've invented a new

method. We don't pluck fowls now, we roast them in their plumage which naturally drops off itself, and it's the sooner ready."

"That's a manner of roasting that I never heard of before," said Madame Flambart, "but I doubt if it gives a good taste to the roast."

"We'll see," said the captain, "let us cut them up."

And the captain, who was a good carver, dismembered the goose and the ducks. The ladies, who had eaten nothing yet, attacked the poultry vigorously, hoping at last to be able to satisfy their appetites; but presently they made sundry grimaces and rejected the morsels on their forks, as they exclaimed,—

"Ugh, how peculiar it smells!"

"It is bitter, bitter!"

"What is the matter with these unfortunate fowls?"

"I swear to you, captain, that I haven't stuffed them."

"No," said Césarine, "and I wager you have not drawn them."

"Drawn! what do you mean by drawn?"

"What a question to ask! as if we could eat fowls prepared thus."

"Why, I thought they'd be good as they were, and I was very careful not to meddle with them."

"Take them away, and give us some vegetables. God be thanked, they don't need to be drawn.

Come, mesdames, we shall have an anchorite's fare, that is all."

"Yes, but it is not very satisfying."

They brought the young peas and asparagus; but, instead of white sauce, it was a brown sauce which Lundi-Gras had poured over the asparagus.

"What have you put in that sauce?" demanded the captain, "it ought to be white and it's extremely brown."

"It's none the worse for that, captain. I know you like chocolate, so I melted a few cakes in that."

"Asparagus and chocolate! What a mixture!"

"Bring us oil and vinegar quickly, and these young peas, let's see how they are."

"Oh, they're cooked with brandy!"

"I only put five little glasses in to give them some flavor."

"You've given them a fine bouquet."

"Lundi-Gras, you shan't do the cooking again."

"As you like, captain; after all, I'd rather eat food than cook it."

The custard with onions and the cream made with flour put the last touch to the ladies' disgust. Césarine called Martine and said to her,—

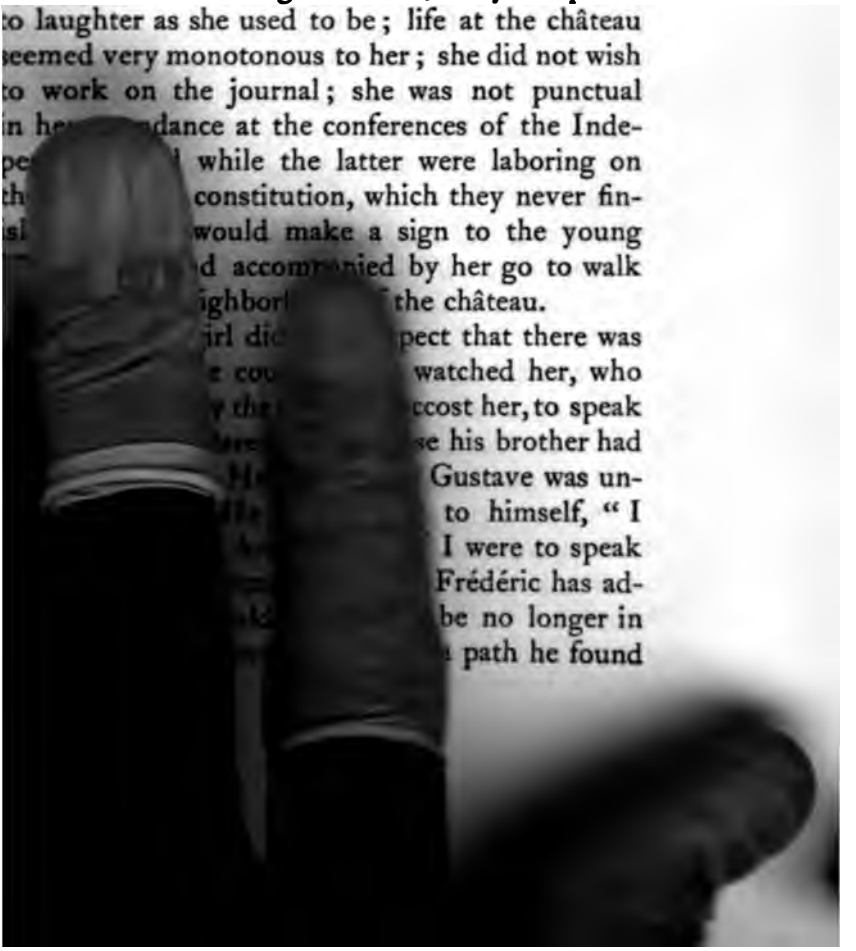
"You must cook us some supper, and hereafter we won't take you away from your ovens."

"My word!" said the cook, "I'd much rather cook than beat the drum — each one to his trade. They didn't teach me cooking that I might beat the drum."

When Césarine had a moment to spare she went to see her daughter, to kiss her little Georgette. More than once she had thought of taking the little one to the château with her; but the child was only fifteen months old, she was very comfortable with her nurse, who took great care of her, and who, besides, could easily come and warn the mother if the slightest thing happened to her nursling.

Elvina nearly always accompanied her sister-in-law when the latter went to see little Georgette; but Elvina was no longer cheerful, lively and prone to laughter as she used to be; life at the château seemed very monotonous to her; she did not wish to work on the journal; she was not punctual in her attendance at the conferences of the Indepe[illegible] while the latter were laboring on th[illegible] constitution, which they never fin-is[illegible] would make a sign to the young [illegible]d accompanied by her go to walk [illegible]ighbor[illegible] the château.

[illegible]irl die[illegible]pect that there was [illegible] cou[illegible] watched her, who [illegible]y the[illegible]ccost her, to speak [illegible]re[illegible]se his brother had [illegible]H[illegible] Gustave was un-[illegible] to himself, "I [illegible] I were to speak [illegible] Frédéric has ad-[illegible] be no longer in [illegible] path he found



himself face to face with Elvina and her servant. Adolphe's sister uttered an exclamation, which, however, was not one of fear. She smiled at Gustave and said,—

"Why is that you, M. Gustave? here in this part of the country? By what chance is it? Did you come to see us?"

"Oh, no, mademoiselle," answered Gustave, affecting coldness and reserve, "I shall be very careful not to present myself at Madame Pantalon's — seeing that she has left her husband, and is surrounded by ladies who have done the same as she. I know that men are viewed in a very ill light by those ladies, that your sister-in-law has always been unamiable to my brother, and I myself am not in her good graces; every time I tried to talk with you she would hasten to place some obstacle in the way. You see that I could not dream of presenting myself at the château."

"But then — what did you come to Brétigny for?"

"My brother has some acquaintances near here, and I came with him."

"Your brother is with you, then?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Does he often see Adolphe?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"And is my brother happier since his wife left him?"

"I don't know if he is happier, but he certainly

is more peaceful. Ah, mademoiselle, had you but remained with your brother, it would have been so sweet to me to have gone to see you, to have some music with you,—to tell you all that I then thought."

"Do you not think the same now?"

"What use would there be in my loving a girl who is taught to look upon us as tyrants, slaves, or as idiots—it comes to the same thing; for a man must be an idiot to consent to be a slave."

"But, monsieur, they don't teach me that."

"Why, very nearly so, mademoiselle. Madame Pantalon believes herself capable of doing everything, of filling every position; but, even if nature had endowed her with every capacity, is that a reason why she should treat her husband as she has done? why she should seek to humiliate him? Mademoiselle, women do not suspect how much of charm they lose when they try to play the rôle of man. And how do you pass your time at the château, mademoiselle?"

"I am learning to ride on horseback, to use weapons, and I practice gymnastics. The ladies are writing, they are establishing a journal. The first number is being printed."

"And do you also write for this journal, mademoiselle?"

"No, monsieur, I feel that I have not the talent to write. Is your brother still a doctor?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, when occasion requires.

According to what they tell me in the village, Madame Pantalon practices medicine also."

"Yes, Césarine asserts that she is as learned as a doctor."

"And you have had a military march about the country?"

"You are aware of that also?"

"They say enough about it in the village."

"And what do they say about it?"

"Pray excuse me from telling you that, mademoiselle."

"No, no, on the contrary, I want to know — I beg of you tell me, M. Gustave."

"Well, they think you very ridiculous — more than ridiculous even."

"Ah, I suspected it; I did not want to be in that procession, but my sister insisted on it."

Elvina lowered her eyes, quite red and wholly confused, as she listened to Gustave's reply,—

"You see whither her counsels lead you. Ridicule is the thing most to be feared in France; you would never have known that at your brother's, where you occupied yourself with music, embroidery, all those charming talents in which women excel, and which render them still more seductive in our eyes."

"What, really, monsieur, you like a woman who embroiders and does wool-work better than a woman who uses weapons and rides a horse?"

"Oh, yes, mademoiselle; not that I absolutely

proscribe to a lady those exercises which amuse her and are agreeable to her; a person of your sex may engage in equestrianism, sometimes, or indeed fire at some puppets to show her skill. But if she makes a habit of it, if for masculine sports she neglects the delicate and dainty little occupations which belong to her sex, then, mademoiselle, that which she gains in strength and courage she loses in grace and charm; all that which makes her more like a man detracts from the woman."

"You are going to leave me, monsieur?"

"I must, really."

"And you have nothing more to say to me?"

"I can say nothing more to her who has preferred Madame Pantalon to her brother; for that has proved to me that she would not listen to me."

And making an effort to restrain himself, Gustave quickly departed, for if he had stayed he felt sure he should have thrown himself at Elvina's feet and sworn to her an eternal love. But his brother had made him understand that that would not be the way to correct her.

Elvina remained alone, sad and thoughtful; she watched Gustave as he left her; she hoped he would turn and come back, but he continued on his road and disappeared. Then she decided to return to the château.

"That is a very nice young man," said Aglaé, as she followed her mistress, "I recognize him well, he used to come to your brother's in Paris."

"Yes, it is M. Gustave Duvassel; but listen, Aglaé, you need not mention this meeting at the château — to anybody, do you hear? because — because it is unnecessary to speak of it. They may prevent me from going out if they know this young man is in the country."

"Be easy, mademoiselle, I know how to hold my tongue when necessary; and, frankly speaking, there's so little that is amusing at the château, that one must catch at the slightest distraction."

Fouillac returned from Paris carrying copies of the famous journal. The "Ear-Piercer" was well printed on fine paper; the lemon-colored cover was satiny, and the lettering showed up well on it; it could be seen from a distance. The lady journalists were delighted; each one of them seized a copy and hastily ran it over to find the article of which she was the author and which seemed to her of the utmost importance since it was printed.

They thanked Fouillac, and congratulated him on the care he had given to the affair. He put an end to their thanks by drawing from his pocket the memorandum of what he had paid for the paper, the press work, the composition, the transportation, the notices and announcements in the newspapers; all of which amounted to the sum of four thousand, six hundred and fifty francs. The delight of these ladies being abated somewhat thereby.

"Why, ladies, what matters this outlay to us?"

exclaimed Césarine; "it is money well spent, since it will bring us in four times, ah, ten times as much. My dear Fouillac, how many 'Ear-Piercers' have you had printed?"

"Three thousand."

"Three thousand! why that isn't enough! we must have ten — fifteen thousand to distribute everywhere, in Paris and in the provinces. It will even be necessary to give some away free."

"Not only is it necessary, but it is indispensable."

"Well, then, dear M. Fouillac, you must go as far as Noyon to order a new impression of the 'Ear-Piercer' — and much larger than the first."

"That's easy enough! I shall take the chaise, and I will go after breakfast."

"We abuse your willingness to oblige, I am afraid, M. Fouillac."

"I have told you that I am at your orders. I know no more agreeable occupation than to be the slave of fair ladies."

"Ah, if all the men did but resemble you. But you are perhaps the only one of your kind."

The sight of their printed articles inflamed the ladies with great zeal; each one wanted to write now, and those who in the first number had had only short articles, now wished to revenge themselves by filling several columns of the "Ear-Piercer."

Some days after Fouillac's return, Aglaé came

"Well, here goes: we'll say that I have some ground right beside that of Father Lupot, a farmer who is much richer than I, seeing that I'm not rich at all, and it is ugly of him to go to law with a poor man who is alone in the world save for his servant and his cows; while he has seven children, to say nothing of his wife, and his dogs and his relations—"

"Well, come to your lawsuit."

"I'm getting there, slow but sure. You see, it dates from a long time back; because you mustn't think that this lawsuit came of itself, quite naturally! oh, no, indeed, that's been brewing for a long time in advance, and I am quite sure that François Lupot has said to himself these years back, 'I must bring a lawsuit against Father Crapoussier —that will delight me.'"

"Why should you think that? had this François Lupot any cause to hate you?"

"Perhaps so, no one knows. First of all, I lent him my horse, and he returned him lame; you must know I went to law with him about that, and he was condemned to pay me ten crowns. Another time he had a tree that hung over my wall, and which he did not have vermiculated; that would stock my garden with caterpillars, so I had him summoned before the mayor for that. Another time, in passing in front of my house, his cart broke and a wheel crushed two of my turkeys which were walking about there. Oh, I had him summoned again, to pay me for my turkeys."

"It seems to me, it was always you who had a suit against your neighbor."

"Yes, but he gave me cause; he made things unpleasant for me. Oh, he's a sly boots, a fox! But this time it was him that began, the sneak! and you'll see how bad a part he played!"

"I'm waiting for you to come to the cause of your quarrel."

The peasant continued,—

"My land was only separated from Lupot's by a narrow path, where he grew nothing — I planted some potatoes at the side of it — on my side, only the potatoes spread as they grew and one could no longer see the path, that wasn't my fault. But François Lupot had already begun to say that I was encroaching on his land. It is not true; in the first place, the lane was no more his than mine. As my potatoes were still growing I set the path a little farther on; but this wrangler of a Lupot said I made a path on his land, and that that gave him the right to eat my potatoes. But I don't see it that way; if he touches my vegetables he is a thief, and touch them he did; I have seen his children taking them out of the ground right under my very eyes, and he would not pay me for them, but you may well imagine it couldn't go on like that. I said to him, 'Pay me for my potatoes!' and he had the face to say to me, 'Give me back my land.' So I told him that this land was the lane and I would give back nothing at all. This is the whole

matter. We've already received summonses on stamped paper, for he has been to Noyon to make a complaint, and the justice of the peace, or the clerk or the chief of police, has sent me this paper, from which it seems I must go to defend my case in two days — and I should very much like you to go in my place. Wait, here are all the papers we have already interchanged; they will explain to you that I am innocent, and that it is Lupot who is wrong. Did you understand me?"

"Yes, yes, I quite comprehend; I am not sure, however, that you have acted within your right."

"Oh, if you aren't sure, you don't understand. I tell you the path doesn't belong to Lupot!"

"Oh, if we can prove that!"

"Why, of course we can prove it; because my cows have used it for a walk and Lupot has never breathed a word, which proves that my cows were in their right."

"Very well, give me all these papers, and I'll see that you win your case."

"There they are, and you'll get me damages for the potatoes they've stolen from me?"

"I hope so. Is the path that has caused this difference long?"

"Hum! not very long, not very short, either. It might be eighty to a hundred feet long."

"Devil take it! that's quite a distance!"

"And you will go to Noyon tomorrow, instead of me?"

"I will go. You can count on me. I will use all my eloquence, and you will win your case, I am assured."

"Why, dang it! I shall give you a good squeeze of my fist, then! Good-by, advocate. The case will be tried at noon; I'll come here the day after tomorrow; you will have come back by then."

"Oh, before that. By the way, where is your land? I should like to see your lane and your potatoes!"

"You have only to inquire at the first house in the village, and they'll point out to you where Father Crapoussier's land or house is. That will be free too, will it not, madame?"

"Why, yes, I haven't asked you to pay anything, have I?"

The villager departed backwards, bowing to the ground. Césarine was delighted to have a case to defend; she was going to do what her husband did; she was going to exercise the profession of an advocate. She set to work immediately to look over the papers which the peasant had left, she consulted the code, which she explained in a manner favorable to her cause, and in that she imitated the conduct of advocates generally. During these days the work on the "Ear-Piercer" was entirely abandoned. Madame Pantalon, not being quite certain that she knew how to improvise, wrote at first a rough draft of her plea in favor of Crapoussier, whose potatoes had been stolen so shamelessly.

Then she read to her followers this eloquent speech, in which she quoted Cato, Aristotle, Cicero and even Seneca! And all that in regard to potatoes which these great men had not the privilege of knowing.

But Césarine had really an aptitude for being a lawyer; she had wanted to go back as far as the deluge; to speak of Noah and the sacred ark, but she had restrained herself, saying, "For the first time I must moderate my eloquence; I must keep something for a second cause."

The Independents thought her plea magnificent, and were certain that her client would win his case.

The next day Madame Pantalon visited her client's land, and Father Crapoussier showed her the lane, in which it was impossible for two people to walk together. But he explained that this was because of the potatoes, which had encroached without his perceiving it. Césarine, who did not care to walk among the vegetables, contented herself with this explanation and left the peasant, promising that she would win his cause for him.

The day following, at noon, the female advocate was at Noyon, accompanied by Mesdames Étoilé and Flambart, who had wanted to witness her triumph. The judges seemed greatly astonished to see a lady present herself to defend Father Crapoussier's cause. However, they courteously granted her leave to speak, and Madame Pantalon availed herself of the privilege; she spoke for more than

an hour. No one interrupted her, they seemed curious to hear her. When at length she had done, François Lupot advanced. The latter had no lawyer, and appeared in his own defense. So he explained his cause in a few plain words; he did not quote Cicero nor Cato, but he brought a plan of his land, which was verified by and certified to by the experts of the town; they could see there what was formerly the path and where it now was, this being the important point in the case. On receiving this plan, the president of the tribunal said,—

"We must examine this carefully. We shall not give judgment until tomorrow."

Then Césarine returned to the château with her two companions, who said to her,—

"It is disagreeable that judgment should not be rendered immediately. But you can be certain that your cause is won."

"You think so, mesdames?"

"There is no doubt of it!" resumed Madame Flambart; "if you could have seen the air of surprise, astonishment evinced by the judges as they listened to you. It was really a sight to be seen. Why, you were magnificent! You spoke for fifty-two minutes without stopping."

"Fifty-seven, madame, I had my watch, and I counted them."

"You couldn't find many men who could do as much."

"There are some, but they are rare."

"When it is a question of speaking for a long time, and without a pause, the women always have the advantage."

The captain said to his niece,—

"Since you are an advocate, it is necessary that you should have a robe made such as they wear."

"No, uncle, I shall be most careful not to do anything of the sort," cried Césarine. "I want to be an advocate without the robe, I wish to resemble these gentlemen in nothing."

During the whole evening Madame Pantalon received the congratulations of her friends, and Fouillac, who had been to inform Father Crapoussier that the judgment would not be rendered until the next day, but that he might be quite easy as to the issue of his suit, returned to tell Césarine that the peasant "expected to come in person to offer his thanks as soon as he returned from the town, where he must first go to be instructed as to the tenor of the judgment and as to the damages which François Lupot would be condemned to pay for having eaten his potatoes."

They awaited the next day impatiently. On the stroke of two in the afternoon Césarine said,—

"The judgment was to have been rendered at one o'clock, and no doubt it won't be long before we see Father Crapoussier."

In fact, a quarter of an hour later the villager entered the château,— but not like the evening before with his back bent as he bowed to every-

body. This time he saluted no one, but came on to the porch and entered the groundfloor, with his hat on his head and striking the floor with his thick stick, as he shouted furiously,—

"Where is she, this Madame Pantalon? this twopenny-halfpenny lawyer, who assures you that she will win your lawsuit for you, and who, instead of that, plunges you in such hot water that you don't know how you'll ever get out of it. Where is she, that I may tell her what she has done. She has no business to take people in like that. She's nice, she is, with her gratis! I should have done much better to have paid an advocate for the job who would have won my case, than to put it into the hands of some one who didn't know how to plead."

Césarine came in with several of her friends, and on perceiving Father Crapoussier said to him,—

"Well, are you satisfied?"

"Satisfied! satisfied! Dang it! are you making game of me, Madame Twaddler? It's not enough to have made me lose my case, but you must chaff me too!"

"Lost your lawsuit! you have lost your lawsuit?"

"Yes, yes — lost it! Jingo, it seems you talked for an hour without stopping and they got tired of it, the judges did, and no wonder, for you said a whole lot of stupid things that had no connection with my affair."

"Peasant! you are a fool; be more polite or—"

At Césarine's apostrophe our peasant drew himself up.

"A fool! Yes, so I was, to trust myself to you, to think that a woman could understand anything of law matters. Lupot wasn't so stupid, not he! he defended himself all alone. And do you know what the cursed judgment means? It condemns me to pay a hundred crowns damages for having planted on land that did not belong to me. A hundred crowns! it's frightful! and more than that, I must take up my potatoes for two metres, so they say, that the path may be where it was before. And my potatoes will never grow after they are transplanted. I know it well. This judgment has ruined me!"

"Ruined you! Come now, they tell me you are the richest man in the village."

"Those who told you that lied. To move my potatoes and pay a hundred crowns to Lupot, and then the expenses of the suit — it'll give me the cholera morbus. And you, you wretched advocate! are the cause of all this. When people don't know how to gain cases they shouldn't undertake them. Lupot told me you spoke of M. Cicero and M. Seneca, as if I knew those people? and as if they could know anything about my potatoes. You said lots of stupid things. You'd do much better to look after your pot-au-feu, than to play the advocate."

"You are insolent — go away at once.

"Insolent! Come, no big words, for I won't stand them."

"Lundi-Gras! Lundi-Gras!"

"Here I am, captain."

"Put this man out immediately; if he resists, thrash him."

"Yes, captain. Come, get out! quick march!"

"What's this! They want to fight me now. This is the last straw! They tell you they'll serve you 'gratis,' and then they thrash you."

The peasant tried to resist, he made a motion as if to raise his stick, but Lundi-Gras was still able for him. He snatched the villager's stick and, pushing the man in front of him, he put him out of the château; then he threw his stick at his feet and said to him, "Don't let me see you here again, or I'll flog you with your own stick."

While Father Crapoussier went off swearing and vociferating against Madame Pantalon, the latter retired to her chamber, very much vexed at the result of the first cause she had had to defend.

CHAPTER XI

A Water Party. Fouillac as a Speculator. A Wild Boar Hunt

A certain amount of gloom was cast upon the company at the château by this episode of the lawsuit; but Madame Grassouillet, who loved excitement and movement, wished before all things to procure some amusement for herself, and said the next day,—

"Mesdames, we will work at our journal, that's all very well; but we must not be always working. We were promised a great many diversions, such as fishing and hunting; to fish is a very quiet pleasure, it is not yet the season for hunting; but there is a fine piece of water at the end of the garden, it is quite extensive, and in some places bordered by little rocks and grottoes; it is very picturesque. Well, we haven't yet thought of boating and I propose we shall go on the water after dinner."

"That's a charming idea!"

"Oh, I never go on the water," said Madame Vespuce, "I don't know how to swim, and I might be drowned."

"Could anyone really be drowned there? Is your piece of water deep, Césarine?"

"Why, no, only about four feet. There is no danger."

"Thank you! four feet, I should be over the nose in it," said Zénobie. "I shan't go."

"Good heavens! mesdames, you need not be uneasy; we must first of all find out if there are enough boats to carry us all. Aglaé, tell Lundi-Gras to come here."

"Lundi-Gras, how many boats are there on the lake?"

"Three, captain."

"How many persons will they hold?"

"Eight apiece."

"They will more than accommodate us then; and are they all in good condition?"

"No, captain; the green is sunk, the blue has one side damaged, but the red is in perfect order."

"Confound it! why didn't you tell us at once that there was only one fit for use? — and that will only hold eight."

"Or nine or ten, by squeezing a little."

"That's all right; those who don't go the first time, will go the second."

"I," said Madame Dutonneau, "I claim the place of boatman; I row perfectly well. I have often led the boats. I will make this one go, I promise you."

"Very well, that is understood, you will be our boatman. Lundi-Gras, you will see that the boat is in good condition?"

"Be easy about that, captain."

After dinner the ladies, who had all changed their gowns for yachting costumes, resorted to the piece of water. Lundi-Gras was awaiting them there, and kept near the boat to help the company to get into it. He had placed a plank which served as a bridge, in order that they might reach the boat without getting their feet damp. As for himself he stood with the water up to his shoulders that he might guard the passage of the ladies. But water was his element, he would rather be in it than out of it.

The boatman, handsome Madame Dutonneau, jumped into the boat. After her stepped Césarine, Madame Étoilé, Madame Boulard, Madame Bouchetrou, Madame Grassouillet, the Widow Flambart and two damsels of mature age, who asserted that they could swim like carp. This made nine persons, and Lundi-Gras was careful to say to them,—

"Always keep in the middle of the boat, don't all lean to the same side unless you want to capsize it. In any case don't be afraid; if you fall into the water, I'll fish you out again."

But as these ladies greatly preferred not to have to be fished out, they kept very quiet on the benches placed across the boat; Madame Dutonneau had taken the oars, she used them very skilfully, she cut the water, she passed through the narrowest places, and turned around the little isles

which made the lake look so pretty. The company was delighted, they cried,—

"Honor to our boatman."

"Long live the woman who knows how to steer her boat!"

"Madame Dutonneau would be worthy of the galleys."

"What! the galleys?"

"I meant by that that she rows better than a galley slave."

"Oh, what a pretty scene."

"I would willingly pass my life on the water."

"And those cowardly things who were afraid!"

"Oh, how we shall mock at them on our return."

However, proud of the eulogies she received, Madame Dutonneau, to show her skill, wanted to turn quickly in front of a little rock which at this place bordered the stream, but whether she did not take a wide enough turn, or whether the rock lay farther out under the water, the little bark touched violently against the reef; no harm would have resulted therefrom had the persons in the boat kept quiet; but at the shock which made itself felt they were frightened and all precipitated themselves to the other side of the boat; then that which Lundi-Gras had foreseen happened; the weight of the ladies capsized the light boat and they all fell into the water.

At the loud cries they uttered, Lundi-Gras, who from the bank had not lost sight of the boat, had

immediately thrown himself into the water and came to help those who could not swim. Césarine and her friends were already, without the help of the old cabin boy, on terra firma; but the elderly maidens who had pretended to be able to swim like carp were shrieking loudly and calling for help. Lundi-Gras soon seized them; he put one of them on his back, pushed the other before him, and presently these false carp were out of danger.

Césarine then looked around her, saying,—

"Let's see, is every one fished out? It seems to me they are —"

"And Madame Boulard?" cried Paolina, "I don't see her."

"Good heavens! you are right, poor Madame Boulard is still in the water. Lundi-Gras!"

"Hallo, Lundi-Gras!"

"Good heavens! has he taken a header?"

"Lundi-Gras, where are you?"

"Here I am, captain."

"Quick! quick! you must get Madame Boulard out."

"Be easy, captain, I see something waving over there, it's a hand which rises from the water; that must be the missing lady — I'll go and bring her to you."

Lundi-Gras threw himself into the water and soon arrived at the place where he had seen the arm; it was in fact Madame Boulard's; the poor woman, whose head was only half above water, had

begun to lose her breath. The cabin boy managed to raise her in such a way that she could get the water out of her mouth. He wanted to reach the bank with his burden, but Madame Boulard exclaimed,—

"No, no, not yet, and my chignon! I've lost my chignon in the water; I must find it—look for my chignon in the water."

"Why, madame, how do you suppose I can find your hair in the water? The fishes will have swallowed it."

"No, no, I want my chignon, I'll place myself astride your shoulders, you will swim, and I will look for my fine chignon, it cost me forty francs and it is worth a hundred. Swim, sailor, swim! that is your trade, you can swim perfectly, I am very comfortable on your back."

On the bank they were astonished that Lundi-Gras and Madame Boulard did not come towards them. However, they had no more fears for that lady, for they saw her in the water astride the old cabin boy's back; from afar she produced the effect of a siren. It was altogether original.

"What does this mean?" said Césarine. "Does she want to learn to swim? Why she will completely exhaust poor Lundi-Gras; and then we can't wait here for her any longer, we must go and change our clothes."

"We are dripping wet, so much the worse for us, and we must go and change."

"That's an excellent idea — besides, it is only with money that one makes money; water always runs towards the river, 'who risks nothing gains nothing,' I could quote as much in regard to this as Sancho; but instead of proverbs I want to employ myself in making you a millionnaire. What one can't do for one's self, one is sometimes successful in doing for others."

Madame Flambart, who had heard this conversation, said in her turn to Fouillac,—

"I am not very rich, I have only five thousand francs income, which is little for a woman who believes in keeping up with the fashions. I have, at a banker's, thirty thousand francs, which brings me in hardly fourteen hundred francs; I'm going to give you power of attorney and you will draw out this thirty thousand francs and, while you are looking for a good investment for Madame Pantalon, if you find one for me you can let me know."

"With great pleasure, my dear widow, it is even possible that I can invest your money and Madame Pantalon's in the same affair. I will tell you as to that on my return."

So Fouillac went to Paris, furnished with power of attorney of these ladies and the instructions he must follow to push the sale of the "Ear-Piercer" and give it great publicity.

During the absence of their agent, these ladies made plans for the employment of the profits which would come to them from the lemon journal.

"We must put all these profits together," said Césarine, "and when they amount to a good round sum, buy a pretty estate large enough to lodge all those of us who wish to live as a community. We will choose a pretty site in a place where the air is good — that will be an agreeable retreat, and we'll send there all those who are sick."

"Yes, the consumptives only?"

"Why consumptives only?"

"Because if they care for all the sick there, our pretty retreat will become a hospital."

"Mesdames, permit me," said pretty Amandine, "you don't wish anyone to touch the profits, that seems to me rather arbitrary. As for me, I need money, I want to buy several things. I demand all that is coming to me."

"Madame Grassouillet, allow me to say that at first it will be only right to reimburse those who made the advances — as I and Madame Flambart have done; for it was we two only who backed the publication of the 'Ear-Piercer.'"

"Reimburse you for your advances, that's well enough; but I wish to have my share of what remains."

"I," said Madame Vespuce, "have a big enough bill at my dressmaker's, I shall not be sorry to settle with him."

"That's enough, mesdames, we will settle all that when M. Fouillac returns."

"Ah, I wish he was back now!"

"And me too."

"Oh, that cursed money, so often maligned, yet one always comes back to it."

Fouillac was five days absent. The ladies wasted their time, for they could think of nothing, dream of nothing but the profits which they hoped to receive, the greater number having refused to leave their money in fund to buy a villa.

At last their man of business came back. His countenance was grave, almost gloomy, which was not usual with him; he began by handing a pocket-book to Césarine and another to Madame Flambart, saying,—

"I have received your funds."

"Very well, dear M. Fouillac. Oh, we were quite easy as to that matter. But the journal, please give us, before you do anything else, an account of its activity and its passivity. We are burning to know how we stand with the 'Ear-Piercer.'"

Fouillac pulled a long envelope from his pocket, and took a paper therefrom, saying,—

"It is with regret, mesdames, that I am obliged to tell you that the 'passive' surpasses the 'active' by a great deal! but you must not let that frighten you; in the inception of any enterprise it is almost always thus. It is a good sign, for, as the proverb says, 'Who wins at first gets but smoke; but who wins at the second time, gets good!'"

"In fact, M. Fouillac, we are not asking for

proverbs, but for the account of the sale of the first number of the 'Ear-Piercer.'"

"I'm coming to it, mesdames; but please don't be impatient; when it is a question of accounts it is necessary to take time, or else one risks errors! Here it is! The first expense of the 'Ear-Piercer' was four thousand six hundred and fifty francs."

"We know that! Go on."

"Allow me; I wish to clearly define the account; I had twelve thousand extra copies of the first number printed, as you wished, that cost me six hundred francs."

"That's right. But all these expenses have been paid."

"Well, I don't ask you to pay them over again; I'm merely defining the account of the expenses. This time, to push the sale of the second number —I have paid, for notices and announcements, two thousand three hundred and twenty francs."

"And after? What about the sale?"

"They've placed six thousand four hundred copies of the first number."

"Oh, that is very good indeed, for a beginning."

"Yes, but of this number, six thousand three hundred and ninety-one were distributed free— they have sold only nine copies."

"Only nine! And what about the subscriptions?"

"They have not got a single subscription; the nine numbers have been sold at fifty centimes

apiece, the price marked; total, four francs, ten sous, from which we must deduct half for the commission on the sales."

"Half for commission! why that is monstrous!"

"He asserts, on the contrary, that it is not enough, that he usually gets at least two-thirds."

"Why doesn't he ask for the whole?"

"You will have to give him all, if he should ask for another commission. In fact, I have received forty-five sous profit; then from that we must deduct some two thousand three hundred francs of additional expenses; and there remains to be paid two thousand three hundred and seventeen francs, seventy-five centimes, that I have taken from the sum I brought to Madame Pantalon. Here is the exact account of the little yellow journal, for which you have up to the present disbursed in all seven thousand five hundred and sixty-seven francs and seventy-five centimes."

The brows grew dark, faces lengthened and several voices were raised to say,—

"It was hardly worth while to work as if we were paid for it."

"A nice success is the 'Ear-Piercer'!"

"They will perhaps ask us to pay our share of the expenses."

"Catch me giving anything!"

"So much the worse for them; those who had the idea of establishing a journal ought to bear the consequences."

These ladies, at this moment, forgot that they had all conceived the idea when Madame Étoilé had brought the subject on to the carpet.

The day after Fouillac's return Madame Grassouillet and Madame Vespuce left, like the lady of the chignon, without saying good-by to anyone.

"Those two ladies think of nothing but dress," said Césarine, "let them join Madame Boulard, I regret them little. They thought, perhaps, that I should make them reimburse their shares of the money I have advanced. They little know me. I can support this loss without distressing myself. However, I should like to make a good deal of money, to realize the plan I have conceived of a retreat for women who have cause to complain of their husbands."

"Ah, my dear, you will need an immense house," said the Widow Flambart.

"I hope that Fouillac can find us an advantageous investment. He told me yesterday evening that he would come this morning to talk business with me. I'm expecting him now."

"I, like you, have every confidence in this honest, obliging Fouillac; he is not a man, he is a spaniel, and if it is allowable to believe in metempsychosis, I am quite sure that Fouillac was formerly a dog, and it was to recompense his fidelity that he was changed into a man."

"Poor fellow! it would have been much better to have left him a dog. But I am expecting this

dear Fouillac; stay with me, what he has to say will interest you equally."

Fouillac presented himself with an almost mysterious air; he closed the door behind him, murmuring,—

"Mesdames, I think it needless that all the people who are here should know what I have to say to you, for when money is concerned I have noticed that one is more successful if one keeps one's plans secret. If you tell everybody what you want to do, they'll seize your idea and pr— it is let out."

"Your reasoning is correct; what you are going to say shall remain between us three. We are ready to hear you, my dear Fouillac."

"Mesdames, under every circumstance, see that you follow my reasoning, in business, above all. To be successful, to make money, to make a fortune even, what is necessary? Find something new that will be useful, or economical, or agreeable. Sometimes the most simple thing, to which one has perhaps never given a thought, will obtain an enormous success and becomes the rage, then you exploit this discovery and your fortune is made. You understand that, do you not?"

"One would have to be an idiot not to understand. But all this does not give us any information."

"Wait a bit, follow my reasoning still. The only question is, in order to make a fortune, to find

some invention, an entirely new discovery. You will tell me that is difficult, but chance will often serve you, put you in the way to find that vein which should lead us to a mine of gold — "

"Good heavens! M. Fouillac, if you have found this vein, tell us all about it; we are pining to know."

"I have not found it personally, but it comes to the same thing; that is what I am going to tell you. I have no need to recall to you, mesdames, the success which for a long time past tobacco has obtained in France, and year after year this trade is augmented so greatly that there are times when the tobacco merchants are short or the cigars are faulty, the good ones, that is; one can always find enough bad ones."

"But what has tobacco to do with our funds?"

"Patience, we are coming to it — there is a fortune, do you hear, an immense fortune for anyone who can manufacture good cigars to sell at a low price! at a low price — that is everything. Well, I have discovered a man, a foreigner from Baden, who has found the secret. He mixes with his tobacco the leaves of the horse-chestnut, and they render the cigar delicious. He has experimented with it on a small scale, and those to whom he has sold his cigars have been delighted and asked him vociferously for more. But our inventor lacks funds. Here, madame, is the thing for you to take up — but on a large scale — a very large scale! We

must have a great many workmen, we must establish a factory, shops! we must send these cigars to the four quarters of the globe, we must oblige the whole universe to smoke. Glorious! what a fortune you will make. Will you go into it?"

"Why not?" said Césarine, "if you think it is a good thing."

"I will answer for it, as if it were my own."

"I'll put my thirty thousand francs into it," said Madame Flambart, "besides, I shan't be sorry to make these gentlemen smoke horse-chestnuts. Ah, how I shall make game of them later on."

"That is settled, M. Fouillac, I return you the fifty thousand francs, which I have made up to the full amount. Later on we intend that you shall have your share of the profits for this."

"Please, mesdames, don't trouble yourselves about me. I am only too happy to occupy myself for you."

"Do you know where to find your inventor?"

"Yes, he has returned to his country, but he has given me his address and is impatiently expecting me — for I told him I was going to find him some money. In the morning I shall start for Germany. Take my advice and guard this secret carefully, even from the captain. When I shall bring you back a million of money you will be free to speak."

"You are right, we will say nothing. We shall wait until the business is going well and is bringing us profits before we mention it."

"Start with all speed, my dear Fouillac, and pursue the matter as if it were your own."

The next day Fouillac left Brétigny again, taking with him Madame Pantalon's fifty thousand francs, and the Widow Flambart's thirty thousand.

The "Ear-Piercer" being so unsatisfactory from a business point of view, these ladies had entirely renounced the trade of journalism. The life at the château would have appeared monotonous, perhaps, had it not been animated from time to time by differences, quarrels, little coolnesses which arose between the ladies. Not a day passed but it was necessary for Madame Pantalon to intervene to establish peace among the Independents, none of these ladies being willing to yield to another in the slightest discussion; nor did they admit Césarine's supreme power without murmuring.

But an unexpected event occurred one day which afforded occupation for these ladies. Aglaé, who went very often for long country walks early in the morning, and who on these occasions often met Frédéric and Gustave, with whom she had conversations which she was careful not to report at the château — Aglaé came running to the company assembled for breakfast, exclaiming,—

"Oh, mesdames! great news! they are talking of nothing else in the village."

"What is it, Aglaé, that they are talking of?"

"Of the wild boar."

"The wild boar? what wild boar?"

"The one which is in the neighboring wood, where he's ravaging everything, frightening everyone, so that nobody dare venture into the wood."

The captain drew himself up in his armchair saying,—

"A wild boar in the neighboring wood — that seems very extraordinary to me — I have never seen or heard of a wild boar in this neighborhood. Where the devil can this one have come from?"

"Why, the forest of Compiègne, which is not very far from here?"

"Then the wild boar must have travelled from Compiègne as far as here without having met any obstacles or hindrances on the way. That seems impossible of belief to me. Send Lundi-Gras here."

The former cabin boy arrived, planted himself before the captain, and waited.

"Lundi-Gras, have you heard tell of a wild boar which is straying in the neighboring wood?"

"Yes, captain; that is to say, only this moment little Nanon said to her father, 'Papa, don't go in the wood; there's a wild boar there, who will attack you and devour you.'"

"Did Nanon say that? Go and bring her here."

Little Nanon came, her mouth full as usual, and hiding some pace eggs under her apron, the captain questioned her,—

"Nanon, you told your father there was a wild boar in the wood?"

"Yes, monsieur le capitain."

"How did you know that? Have you seen the wild boar?"

"Oh, no, I haven't seen him, but Madame Matois, Matois' wife, said to me this morning, she said, 'Little one, don't you go idling in the wood, for you may be eaten by a wild boar I've seen there. It was an enormous beast, with a head like an elephant's, I barely had time to take to my heels and get away.'"

"The woman saw him?"

"Yes, yes, saw him, since I tell you she described him to me, and then later on several of the village children came running quite scared out of their wits, saying, 'There a big beast in the wood; it's not a wolf, but it's nearly as big as a bear.'"

"There, mesdames," said the captain, "it seems you really may hunt some big game. Ah, if I could but walk I would not let such an occasion of hunting something besides larks pass by."

"Rest assured, uncle, we shall seize this occasion. A wild boar hunt! Do you hear, ladies, what a pleasure is offered you? For it pleases me to think that you won't refuse to come with me to hunt this wild boar. Here is an opportunity for displaying our skill, our courage. Come, mesdames, to arms, we must get our rifles and load them with buckshot. We must use that, mustn't we, uncle, to kill a wild boar?"

"That is ordinarily used to shoot hares; but I think it will be quite sufficient to fight your wild

boar, which is perhaps only a big dog that's got lost."

"Oh, no, indeed, master," cried Nanon, "Madame Matois said to me, 'It's a wild boar of the fiercest kind, he has hair all over him — bristles — and tusks.'"

"So much the better! we shall find him good eating."

The Independents did not appear as delighted as was Césarine at the hunting party that was proposed to them.

"I shall not go with you," said Elvina; "I should be too much afraid of the beast coming towards me. I should be more likely to fire into the air than to fire at him."

"I don't think a boar hunt poetical enough," said Madame Étoilé. "Oh, if it was a question of a roe, that would be all well enough. A roe is interesting, a deer weeps when it sees it is about to be taken; but a wild boar, fie! the very odor of it is enough."

"Well, I," said Madame Flambart, "I intend to kill the animal and bring his head to the captain! Captain, you hear, I promise you the head."

"We will eat it together, hang it!"

The other ladies also decided to take part in the hunt.

"Let us go and get ready, mesdames," said Césarine. "Let us see that our weapons are well loaded, and that we have plenty of ammunition.

Oh, I must take my hunting horn with me. This is the time, if ever, to use it."

"And what about dogs?" said Madame Dutonneau. "Are we not to have any dogs?"

"Faith, mesdames," said the captain, "I haven't hunted for a long time past. I have still two dogs which were formerly very good; I am afraid that now they will be rusty. No matter. Lundi-Gras, you will let Minos and Courtand loose to accompany these ladies."

"Yes, captain."

They dressed themselves. They put on the costume which was supposed to be a uniform; each one of them took her rifle and put in her belt a short poniard-shaped knife, which was not a Toledo blade by any means. Thus equipped, the ladies reassembled in the courtyard, and the captain placed himself in his window that he might review them. Césarine had, in addition, a big hunting-horn slung to a strap which passed over her shoulder, and an old sabre of her uncle's hung at her side.

Lundi-Gras led the two dogs, which had formerly been hunters, but which seemed to have totally forgotten their former occupation. One of them, Minos, would not go on, he had to be pushed or pulled along, but he lay down when he had taken a few steps. Courtand was more wakeful, he was always frisking; but having been accustomed by his master to "look handsome" and stand on his hind legs for a piece of sugar, after capering

about, he came and placed himself in that manner before the huntresses.

"Come, Courtand, this is no question of 'looking handsome' to get something," said Césarine, "if you do that before this wild boar he won't give you sugar, but he'll pin you with his tusks. Come, confound it! remember your old trade. Tally-ho! tally-ho."

Courtand pricked his ears but still remained on his hind legs. They were obliged to give him a few strokes of the whip to make him drop on his four feet.

"Do you want Lundi-Gras to go with you?" asked the captain.

"No, uncle, we don't need him — they would only say afterwards that it was he and not us who had killed the wild boar. No man — he would spoil everything; we now have an opportunity of showing what we are capable of, and we wish to profit by it."

The little troop set out on its march proudly, with heads in the air, as though they were marching to the conquest of the world. The villagers whom they met on their way shouted,—

"They are going to kill the wild boar — bravo!"

"And where is the animal that you take for a wild boar about here?"

"It is, perhaps, nothing but a wolf."

"Wolf or wild boar, these ladies must have a good deal of courage."

"Bah! leave them alone for that, they want to see the wolf."

However, when they reached the entrance to the wood, in which the wild boar ought to be, the ardor of the Amazons seemed somewhat abated; they walked less quickly and after taking a few steps under the trees, Madame Dutonneau stopped, saying,—

"Now, must we not settle what we are going to do?"

"Why, that is all settled," said Césarine; "we must look for the wild boar. As soon as we see him we must fire on him."

"Pardon, madame," said a mature damsel, "but at what part must we aim to kill the animal?"

"At the head, of course."

"At the head, do you think so? I should have thought at the tail."

"No, don't aim at that, it would be lead wasted."

"But in firing at the head, if one were to miss, he would be furious."

"And if you shoot at his tail do you suppose that will please him any more?"

"Mesdames," said the Widow Flambart, "shoot where you like, the principal thing is to hit him."

"Yes, it really matters little whether he's killed by the head or by the tail, provided he be killed, that is the essential thing."

Madame Bouchetrou started with fright and recoiled suddenly, uttering a cry; the greater part of

the ladies immediately got away from her as fast as they could.

"What is the matter with them, now," demanded Césarine, who had remained in her place, as well as Madame Flambart.

"There he is! there he is — I thought I saw him moving in that thicket to the left and I imagined I had the wild boar on my back."

"If you run away as soon as you see him, it promises well for our success."

"I shall not run away when I see him at a distance — a long distance — but if I perceive him near me, do you suppose I shall stay in my place and try to coax and wheedle?"

"Let us advance; a wild boar doesn't keep in the border of a wood."

"Walk carefully, then —"

"I cannot get on, Courtand keeps stopping in front of me to 'look handsome.'"

"Kick him, why don't you?"

"Oh, that would be too bad, poor dog! he is so nice."

"And this wretched Minos doesn't seem inclined even to walk."

"I have a great mind to sound the horn, that would wake him up."

"Yes, but that might waken the wild boar also, and we want to surprise him in his lair."

"Yes, I think we must kill him only when he is asleep."

"Much glory we should get then! to kill an animal while he is sleeping. Why, mesdames, you don't understand the pleasures of the chase; it is the danger which doubles them, increases their value."

"I care much less for glory than for my face; wild boars have enormous tusks, and I shouldn't care to get them in my face. I beg of you, no hunting horn."

They walked for some time in the wood without perceiving the smallest beast. Césarine, who was tired of finding nothing, detached her horn from her shoulder, saying,—

"I'm sorry to do it, but I came here to find a wild boar, and I wish to know if some one is making sport of me."

Putting her instrument to her mouth, she drew from it piercing sounds, which were repeated by all the echoes round. Minos immediately began to bark, Courtand to frisk, then in another moment a very large animal passed, running not twenty feet from the company.

"There he is! there he is! I have roused him at last. Come, mesdames, imitate me, we must run after him. Tally-ho! tally ho! Come, mesdames, forward!"

Instead of imitating Madame Pantalon, several ladies took another way and escaped, saying,—

"She did a great thing in sounding her confounded horn, she has rendered the animal furious."

"I have no desire to get near it."

"Nor I, I am too much afraid of it."

"I should like very much to go in pursuit of it, and I've tried in vain to make this cowardly Minon go on, but he won't budge, and I can't hunt without a dog, that will never do—it isn't good form."

But the courageous ladies had followed Césarine. Only, one went one way, the other another way. Presently they heard shots from a gun and ran off uttering loud cries, the gunshots frightened them. The animal they were hunting passed quite near them. Then when they tried to run fast one caught herself in the brambles and fell, another tried to climb a tree; but the shots came nearer, then there were moans and groans.

Olympiade came along holding her chin, she had received a buckshot in her face, while Madame Dutonneau had received one in another place; Madame Flambart had barked her nose on the branch of an oak, but Césarine sounded a fanfare and from all sides they heard,—

"He is killed! he is killed!"

"We must go and see the wild boar!"

"It was the lady called Pantalon who killed it."

Some peasants and children who had been attracted to the wood by the sound of the horn hastened to the place where the animal which had been killed was lying, and beside which Madame Pantalon was still standing as she sounded a blast. Everyone tried to get nearest to the dead beast;

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TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

: soon shouts of laughter arose and the villagers
›uted,—
'That a wild boar!"
'I dare say! it's a pig."
'Why, yes, wait—I recognize it because he was
h a fine one, it's Matthieu-Jérome's fat porker.
: sold it a fortnight ago to a gentleman from
ris."
'The latter didn't take care of it, I suppose;
must have lost it on the way."
'Yes, yes, it is Matthieu-Jérome's pig!"
'Oh, what a good joke!"
'Yes, I should say so! But how came it to be
l that a wild boar was about here. This is not
place for one."
Césarine said nothing, but she heard all this,
ked at the animal she had killed out of the
ner of her eye, and was not long in convincing
self that the peasants had spoken correctly.
e so-called wild boar was, in fact, nothing but
ery fat pig. She told the peasants to make a
d of handbarrow out of the branches, and to
ry the spoils of the chase to the château. Later
again sounded her instrument to rally the
ıters, or huntresses if you like that better; as
me I like neither one nor the other.
The return from the hunt hardly resembled the
arture; nearly all the ladies were complaining;
: had scorched her hand with her gun, another
l bumped her head against a tree. The mature

young ladies had hurt themselves with the branches and brambles. Madame Bouchetrou's chin was damaged—and Madame Dutonneau had received some buckshot, I need not say where.

The captain laughed heartily on hearing that the wild boar was nothing more nor less than a big pig. But Madame Dutonneau did not laugh.

"That horrid hunt! that wretched hunt! It was well worth our while to put ourselves out like that to kill a pig. And then it is very unfortunate to go hunting with people who can't see clearly or don't know what they are doing. Someone fired at me, and yet I am not aware that I look like a wild boar. I am wounded, and what will Chouchou say when he finds they have damaged me? That will teach me to leave a husband whose only fault is that he is too handsome. Tomorrow, I shall go back to him."

"As you please, my dear madame," said Césarine. "Everyone is free here."

"I shall go also," said Olympiade, "I have a part of my chin all bruised, a little more and it would have carried off my jaw. What should I have said to Bouchetrou when he asked me, 'What have you done with your jaw?' Poor dear pock-marked fellow; and I reproached him with getting vaccinated. Madame Pantalon, I hand in my resignation from the Independents. People run too great risks in your association."

"As you like, madame. Women who change

their sentiments because of a mere scratch are not worthy to be members."

The next day, with Mesdames Dutonneau and Bouchetrou, departed also the two mature young ladies and four others. There remained with Madame Pantalon, of her little troop of Independents, only her faithful Flambart, the poetic Paolina and young Elvina.

The latter, much as she would have liked to leave the château, dared not say so; she could only await her opportunity; but she did not meet Gustave again, and feared he had forgotten her.

Aglaé said each day to her young mistress,—

"Do you see, mademoiselle, everybody is going little by little. I was quite sure that a society composed only of women would not last long. You must have seen that those who were here passed nearly all their time in bickering among themselves. Believe, me, it must soon be our turn to go."

"Good heavens! I confess it would give me great pleasure to leave the château; but I dare not tell my sister-in-law that I wish to leave her."

"Say nothing, but just take yourself off."

"It is all right for these ladies to do that; but it is necessary that I should have a reason, a pretext."

"Let us hope, mademoiselle, that one will present itself."

CHAPTER XII

News of Fouillac. Where Woman Always Returns to Her True Nature.

Césarine resolutely consoled herself for the frequent desertions from her little troop by saying to herself,—

"Before long I shall have money, a good deal of money. I shall then put into execution the plan I have long conceived; I shall buy a delightful estate, where all oppressed women may find protection and shelter. Then, I need not fear desertion, I shall have a crowd of followers flocking about me—and I shall make a choice among these new adherents to form my administration."

Madame Flambart shared Madame Pantalon's hopes; she also spoke her word, rubbing her hands as she did so,—

"Patience! they have left us, but soon they will be coming to seek us. Fortune always brings friends, these ladies have left us because we have experienced a check in our literary occupation; they will come running when they learn that commerce is more favorable to us."

And as Paolina had not followed the example of the others, as she had remained faithful to her

engagements, they did not think it their duty to keep the tobacco business a secret from her. They informed her of the object of Fouillac's journey, what he had gone to do in Germany, and the immense fortune they could not fail to realize from manufacturing cigars from horse-chestnut leaves which would be smoked in the four corners of the world.

Madame Étoilé learned with delight of the discovery of this new kind of cigars; she immediately took her pen in hand, she felt inspired and she improvised the following quatrain,—

Since succulent chicory, that is allowed,
Is mingled with coffee without much ado;
Why should not tobacco be frankly admixed
With the leaves of the horse-chestnut too?

However, a fortnight passed, and they received no news of Fouillac.

"I know very well," said Césarine, "that he cannot as yet have had any results; for before the business can be put into operation he must choose a building in which to establish the manipulation of our new cigars. He must find and engage workmen; and all that takes time."

"No doubt," responded the Widow Flambart, "but dear Fouillac should, at least, have written to you, to let you know that he had found his inventor and if the matter was put in train."

"Perhaps he has not had time to write. To set all that going must have afforded him ample

occupation. While waiting, mesdames, do you know how I have been employing myself?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"Well, you know I don't like to smoke, but to get myself accustomed to cigars, I've smoked two or three every morning. It makes me cough a little, but I shall end by smoking like Lundi-Gras."

"And why are you doing that, my dear?"

"Why in the interest of our enterprise. You know, when the business is set going it will be necessary to give an example by smoking our new cigars and saying they are perfect."

"In fact, that is the way to make the value of our goods known. But, between ourselves, what if cigars made of horse-chestnut leaves should be bad?"

"We will smoke others, true havanas; but we will always say they are ours, and as they will look exactly the same, people will be deceived."

"Very well conceived. We will do like you, and smoke every day.

Twelve days rolled by. They began to be less tranquil: the ladies all had sore throats from smoking so much. They found the expense of cigars to pass the time considerable. Césarine went often to caress her babe; little Georgette was charming, and, although she was only seventeen months old, began to stammer the name mamma. Every time the young mother saw her daughter she was tempted

to bring her with her to the château, but the nurse begged her to leave the little girl for a while longer, saying to her,—

"You see, madame, how well she is doing with us; and as she is just beginning to cut her double teeth, this is hardly the time to take her away. Leave her to us a little longer."

Césarine yielded to the nurse's entreaties, however, she thought in advance of the happiness that would be hers when her child should be with her.

At length a letter reached the château. They ran towards Lundi-Gras, who held in his hand the missive the postman had just brought.

"Give it me! give it me, quick!" said Césarine, to the old cabin boy.

"Pardon me, captain, but it's not for you; it is for Mademoiselle Elvina Pantalon."

"For my sister! and who has dared to write to her?"

So saying, Césarine snatched the missive, but almost immediately she recognized her husband's handwriting. Then she went in search of Elvina and gave her the letter, saying,—

"Your brother has written to you, see what it is he wants. I can't imagine what this gentleman can have written."

Elvina hurriedly opened the letter and read aloud,—

My Dear Little Sister: — I have been ill for some days, and obliged to keep my bed. It would be very pleasant to me

to have near me a friendly face, surrounded as I am by hirelings only. Is it not possible for you to come and bear me company for a little while? Is your brother no longer your first and best friend? I like to think that it is not thus, and that you allow yourself to remember that you are my sister. I shall expect you.

ADOLPHE PANTALON.

Elvina was quite moved on reading this letter. She looked at Césarine, and said in a low tone,—

"My brother is ill — he expects me —"

"Well, what are you intending to do?"

"Why, I intend to go to him, to take care of him. Will you not accompany me, Césarine? for, after all, he is your husband. You are willing to care for strangers, will you not also care for him?"

"Oh, he would never allow himself to be tended by me. He does not believe me capable of curing him. Besides, as you see, he doesn't mention me in his letter. It's not me he wants."

"He can't ask for you, since you left him of your own volition. Well, will you not come with me, Césarine?"

The young woman hesitated for a moment, then she answered,—

"No, I shall not go."

"You will not go? you will not go and offer to care for your husband, who is suffering?"

"My husband was delighted to see me leave; he has said nothing, done nothing, to try to get me to go back."

"Do you want him to crave your pardon, then, when you quarrelled with him every day?"

"It seems to me, little sister, that you allow yourself to say rather unamiable things to me!"

"I tell you just what I think. Would you have me flatter you? lie to you? Was I not a witness of your tempers, your fits of anger? and it was always when my brother was right that you tried to quarrel with him."

"Little girl, this borders on impertinence. I forgive you, for you are only a child, and you do not understand the scenes that take place in married life, or else you would know that when a woman is in the wrong she must shout the loudest, and try to quarrel with her husband. All women understand these tactics, and never fail to use them."

"I don't wish to vex you, madame. You are right, I am still only a young girl, I understand nothing of the conduct of a married woman. All I know is, that when one is wrong it is very ridiculous to wish to be in the right. For the last time, will you come back to Adolphe?"

"No, I will not."

"In that case I shall go without you. May I take Aglaé?"

"No, I cannot get on without my maid; but Lundi-Gras can take you as far as the station. Then the journey isn't long, you will soon be in Paris. You will return later, I hope?"

"When my brother is quite well again, when my presence is no longer necessary to him, I shall come back, if he does not ask me to stay with him."

"Just as you please! a pleasant journey to you."

Elvina hurriedly made the preparations for her departure, and later went to say good-by to the captain, who said to her,—

"Go, my dear little girl, return to your brother; I begin to think that all my niece's fine plans are soap bubbles, which at a breath will dissolve and vanish. To wish to change the world is like trying to wash a negro white. One may change manners, customs, and language, but there will always be the same passions, the same vices, the same foibles — we must, therefore, resign ourselves to take it as it is."

Aglaé was in despair at seeing Elvina leave without her; she absolutely insisted on accompanying her; but Elvina reminded her that she was in Madame Pantalon's service. The young lady's maid could only find consolation in saying,—

"When all these ladies are gone, and there are but two who are inclined to stay, I hope that mistress will not remain alone with the captain and the old cabin boy. A château, mademoiselle, is nice when there are a good many people in it; but when they are scarce, I'd rather be in the Passage des Panoramas in Paris."

Young Elvina's departure contributed not a little to the melancholy of the life within the château.

Madame Étoilé, who was incessantly buried in her poetry, went to dream alone under the trees; the captain was suffering with his gout; Lundi-Gras was getting tipsy; the gardener was sleeping; Nanon was stuffing herself with nourishment; the cook was getting rusty; and Césarine and Madame Flambart, unable to comprehend Fouillac's silence, began to fear for their money and to smoke fewer cigars. Césarine, unable to contain herself longer, went one morning to her uncle and said to him,—

"My dear uncle, I am in great trouble about M. Fouillac."

"But why are you in trouble about him? A bachelor like Fouillac can't pass all his time here. He's gone to Paris, he's amusing himself!"

"But you are not aware that I entrusted some money to him — a large amount of money, and Madame Flambart, also."

"You confided money to Fouillac? What for?"

"For an enterprise that will bring us in millions. An individual has found a way to make excellent cigars with horse-chestnut leaves."

"Tobacco with horse-chestnut leaves, what kind of rigmarole are you telling me now?"

"I repeat to you what M. Fouillac told me; the cigars have had a great success; there is an immense demand for them, because they can sell them at a low price. It is a discovery which must enrich those who know how to exploit it properly."

"And you believed that, did you?"

"So firmly did I believe it, that I entrusted Fouillac with fifty thousand francs; Madame Flambart confided thirty thousand to him to set the thing going."

"If you had consulted me, you would not have given Fouillac a sou."

"How is that, uncle? Do you doubt his probity?"

"His probity — not altogether, but Fouillac is a gambler."

"He hasn't played for a long time now."

"Because he was entirely without money. But, having this large sum in his hands, don't you suppose he has succumbed to temptation? Have you his address?"

"No, he was to have written to us."

"Well, that's clever! Then, you must wait; but I have no confidence in your cigars made of horse-chestnut leaves. I repeat to you, I am very much afraid you are done."

Four days after this conversation a letter dated from Baden reached the château. It was addressed to Madame Pantalon, who quickly looked at the signature and exclaimed,—

"It is from Fouillac!"

"At last," said Madame Flambart, "the dear fellow! I am quite sure we were wrong to make ourselves uneasy. Read it quick! we are listening."

"I feel afraid to read it," said Césarine.

"The idea! you who are so courageous, so strong-minded!"

"It has passed now — it was but a momentary feeling — listen,—

DEAR AND HONORED MADAME PANTALON:— I am very tardy in sending you news of myself, am I not? and you are perhaps already accusing me of negligence — no, I have not been negligent; but it is because I have nothing very agreeable to tell you, that I said to myself, 'These ladies will know it soon enough.'"

"What does that mean?"

"Why this long preamble?"

"The horse-chestnut leaves have not been a success."

"Hush, mesdames, let me continue —

will know it soon enough.' More than once it has occurred to me never to send you any word of myself; but, I thought, 'They will keep on expecting to hear and that will be very unpleasant for them.'"

"Good heavens, what is he going to say?"

"Silence, Madame Flambart, let me go on—

You must know, then, mesdames, that the story of the horse-chestnut leaves was entirely of my own invention.

"Why the rascal! the scoundrel!

When I found myself in possession of the eighty thousand francs which you had ordered me to draw, I was tempted, not to appropriate them, of that I am incapable, but to double them, to triple them even, with a combination that I had invented a short time before, but which I could not put into execution for lack of funds."

"He's gambled with our money, the wretch!"

"Let me finish —

for lack of funds. I said to myself, 'How sweet it will be to win a large sum for these ladies who have been so good to me!'

But if I had said to you, 'Entrust your money to me, that I may play my martingale,' you would probably have refused me; that is why I invented this little history of artificial tobacco that you were kind enough to believe. Alas, mesdames, something never seen before — twenty-two rouges in succession — that is what upset all my calculations. I have lost your eighty thousand francs, and just see my luck! If I had had twenty thousand francs more the luck would have turned, and I should have won it all back — I remain at Baden, awaiting your answer; if you wish to send me new funds, I am positively certain we shall take a fine revenge.

Yours very devotedly,

FOUILLAC."

This letter fell from Césarine's hands, she was silent, overwhelmed by what she had learned. It was different with the Widow Flambart, who broke forth into complaints, reproaches, vociferations. She stalked about the drawing-room exclaiming,—

"It's shocking! This man has robbed me!—robbed is the only name for it—of thirty thousand francs, the fourth of my modest competence. What shall I do now with four thousand francs less of income? Can I have fresh bonnets on that? Madame Pantalon, you are the cause of my ruin, of the loss I experience at this moment!"

"I, madame, and how am I the cause of it? Why, did I advise you to confide your money to M. Fouillac?"

"No, you did not advise me, but you confided fifty thousand francs to him yourself. That was as good as saying to me, 'That is an honest man.' Then I naturally followed your example and now

I've lost it. You can laugh at it, can't you? Your uncle is very rich and will indemnify you for this loss. But I have no uncle to give me back my poor money. Ah, why did I follow you to this cursed château, where they do nothing but foolishness?"

"Madame, spare your expressions!"

"No, I shan't spare them; I repeat what I said before. They do nothing here but foolishness, your uniform, your journal, your cooking, your boat, your wild boar that was only a pig, on account of which I still have a grazed nose, are all foolishness, blunders, gross blunders. But the last is too much, it fills the measure to overflowing — thirty thousand francs lost! that is to say, I have been swindled out of it — no, robbed of it! Good-by, Madame Pantalon, I leave you and your château, with the most profound regret that I ever accompanied you to it!"

Madame Flambart departed with flying colors, and Césarine went to show her uncle the letter she had received from Fouillac. The captain, when he had read it, said, —

"I expected it would be thus. My darling, the proverbs are always right, 'He who has drunk, will drink; he who has gambled, will gamble.' But never mind, I have some savings, I will repair the misfortune that has overtaken you. That fool of a Fouillac! instead of searching for a martingale, that he might win at roulette, he had much

better have sought a remedy for the gout. That would have brought him in a fortune, that would."

Madame Étoilé, on learning the disastrous outcome of the tobacco affair, put her quatrain back in her portfolio, saying,—

"No one knows; what fails today may be successful later on. Steam was not appreciated all at once; I have great confidence in the horse-chestnut leaves myself. I shall dry some of them and roll them and make cigars of them, which I shall try to get my husband to smoke. For, in fact, as there is no one but Madame Pantalon here to listen to my verses—and she is a very bad listener, I shall go back to Étoilé, who, no doubt, is dying to see me!"

The next day Paolina had followed Madame Flambart, and Césarine was abandoned by all the Independents.

To console herself and forget the successive defeats that had overtaken her, Césarine went every day to kiss her daughter, whom she loved tenderly; for it is quite necessary to a woman to love something, and usually it is her children who stand before all.

But the captain had had an access of gout more pronounced than any of the preceding ones, and for two days Césarine had not left her uncle, whose sufferings she tried to soften, and for whom she was incessantly inventing new remedies which did not help him at all.

Three days later one of the nurse's children came to the château to say to Madame Pantalon,—

"Madame, mamma begs you will come and see your little Georgette, who is rather poorly."

"My child is ill!" cried Césarine, "and how long has she been so?"

"Since the day before yesterday."

"And why did you not come immediately and tell me?"

"Oh, madame, mamma thought it was nothing much, just a cold—a heavy cold."

"No matter, she should have sent to me. I will follow you, little one. Go, I shall be at your mother's immediately, perhaps even before you."

In fact, Césarine had her horse saddled.

"Do you wish me to follow you, madame?" asked Aglaé, who sought every occasion to go out; "I can ride on horseback very well now, and I am so sure of my seat that I can gallop like madame."

"Well, come; if it is necessary to get some medicine at the town I can send you there."

"I should like nothing better, madame; I can go now at a gallop or at a fast trot; I'm no longer afraid of falling."

"Who, then, has taught you to sit your horse so well?"

"Madame, it was watching you."

They started at a gallop, and were soon at the nurse's. Césarine entered quickly; she perceived her daughter, whom the nurse was teaching to

walk. Little Georgette, who already knew her mother quite well, smiled at her and held out her arms.

"She is up, she's walking; why, this is nothing," said Césarine, taking the child on her knees.

"Of course, it is nothing, madame," said the nurse, "that is why I did not want to disturb you; she is hoarse, that is all. But there are some people who get hoarse for a mere nothing; for instance, my man is always hoarse in the evening when he comes home, but it is true that then he has always drunk a drop too much."

"Speak to me, Georgette; do you love me?"

The child said, "Yes, mamma," but it was not in her usual voice, it was a raucous, cavernous sound which was not pleasant to hear. Césarine was seized with consternation.

"My God! what a voice," she cried. "Is my daughter going to have the croup?"

"The croup! the idea? there's no danger of that! If she had the croup she'd be dead now. You know very well, madame, that that is a disease which carries one off in twenty-four hours."

"Can she eat? does she swallow easily?"

"I can answer for it she does; she has just swallowed a good bowl of pap with sugar in it without making a grimace. And, then, see how merry she is; she's playing just as usual."

"In fact, you reassure me? What if I should take her with me?"

"Oh, madame, be careful! The change of air —she has a trifle of fever. You know how much care we take of her. We will not leave her, and she loves to play with my children."

"Yes, yes, that is right. I'll leave her with you still. Besides, I shall come and see her every day. Wait, nurse, here are some herbs that I have brought; make a tea with those and give my daughter some to drink, quite warm."

"You may be quite easy, madame. Your daughter is better cared for than if she was one of my own."

Césarine passed more than an hour with little Georgette; she left her quite reassured, because the child coughed little and did not seem to suffer.

Mademoiselle Aglaé, while trotting behind her mistress, kept looking from right to left, in the hope of seeing one of the gentlemen from Paris whom she often met in the country, but she saw neither of them, and said to herself,—

"Good heavens! have they also gone; but that is impossible. M. La Brie still had a great many things to say to me. He is witty, this M. La Brie, and he can change himself, disguise himself so that one would not recognize him. If he had not told me, I should never have guessed that it was he who came to the château disguised as a sick man."

Three days elapsed, and Césarine had not allowed one to pass without going to the nurse's. Little Georgette still played about and swallowed

without difficulty; she was not depressed; however, her voice did not come back; it was raucous, hoarse, no longer the voice of a child. Madame Pantalon had changed her prescription, she also tried many pectoral lozenges; but there was no change, except that the voice became more hollow.

On the fourth day Césarine, who on the evening before had thought her baby more uneasy, went to the nurse's very early in the morning. She found the good woman in tears, the whole house in grief, for little Georgette was very ill. She breathed with difficulty, her little heart beat fast, she could only just speak, but she smiled when she saw her mother and the latter took the child in her arms, exclaiming,—

"Good God! what has happened to her?"

"Nothing has happened, madame, but in the night the poor little thing turned like this."

"Why, she looks as if she were going to die. Dear child, where have you any pain?"

The little girl pointed to her throat. "That is what frightens me," said the nurse, "because a neighbor tells me that there is a kind of croup that lasts longer than twenty-four hours — which is sometimes a week in forming."

"Oh, good God! why, my daughter is lost, then. A doctor! where is there a doctor?"

"At Noyon. Doctor Durand. I don't know of any others."

"Aglaé, run, take my horse, with yours, and

bring a doctor. Go; don't spare the horses, but hurry! my child seems very ill."

Aglaé left. Césarine held her daughter in her arms and saw with terror that the child's breathing became more difficult, more oppressed. An hour and a half passed; the time seemed eternal to the poor mother. At last Aglaé returned, but she was alone.

"And the doctor?" cried Césarine.

"He has gone to Compèigne."

"But are there no others?"

"It was impossible for me to bring a single one. They had not breakfasted or could not ride a horse."

"Good heavens! but my child will die without help. I will run, throw myself at their feet if it is necessary."

At this moment the room door opened and Frédéric Duvassel appeared. He at once went up to Césarine, and said to her,—

"Madame, I learned just this moment that your little girl is ill — very ill; will you allow me to treat her?"

"Oh, monsieur, heaven has sent you! If you save my child I shall owe you more than life. But she is very ill. Look! here she is, the darling child."

Frédéric examined little Georgette and said immediately,—

"This is croup — a latent croup which takes a

week to develop unless it is arrested at its inception."

"She is lost, then, monsieur?"

"Not yet, but it was time something should be done; this evening it would have been too late. Trust to me, madame, in my travels I have studied this horrible malady. Have confidence, and let me act — I hope still to save your child."

Césarine lacked strength to speak. Frédéric seized the child, placed it on a bed, then took out the instruments from his pockets. The poor mother uttered an exclamation.

"Fear nothing, madame, I shall not hurt her," said Frédéric; "besides, it is necessary in order to save her."

With a surgeon's practised hand he cut the child's tonsils, then he introduced into the throat a long instrument with which he detached and drew away the whitish membranes which intercepted the breath of the sick child. Little Georgette bore this operation perfectly. They saw her, after a moment, breathe freely, strongly.

Then Frédéric called the mother back and said to her,—

"Your daughter is saved, I will answer for her now."

This time Césarine could contain herself no longer, she took Frédéric in her arms, and with tears flowing down her cheeks, said to him,—

"You have restored my daughter to me, mon-

sieur; I owe you more than life itself. And I have always been so unjust towards you; how can I ever return what you have done for me?"

"What can you give me in return?" said Frédéric smiling. "Well, I will tell you, and it will be extremely easy for you to do."

"My poor little Georgette, you are saved!"

"Yes, but she must be kept very quiet today, I have still some remnants of the membranes to take from her throat, but that will be nothing."

"And it will not re-form, monsieur?"

"No, you need have no fear on that score; besides, I shall stay here by your child, and in three days at the latest I want you to take her with you."

"Oh, monsieur, how good you are. You consent to stay in the village until my child is completely cured?"

"I promise to do so."

"What do I not owe you? and how I have misunderstood you, monsieur, for which you must detest me; I have always been so unamiable to you."

"Pretty women are sometimes capricious, and take antipathies; I assure you I do not detest you for that. Besides, you are my best friend's wife, and it would have been sweet to me to obtain your friendship also."

"I don't wish to leave my child today; you will permit me to stay, will you not?"

"You have the right to do so, madame; a mother's

place is always beside her child's cradle. Only, do not kiss her too much, let her sleep. You will see that now her chest is not oppressed her sleep will be sweet."

"Agnès, run to the château, tell my uncle that my daughter is saved, thanks to M. Frédéric Duvanel."

"I think the captain will hardly remember me."

"But I sincerely hope that you will not leave without coming to see my uncle."

"Be easy as to that, madame, I have not yet finished that which brought me to the country."

Frédéric kept his promise; at the end of three days little Georgette was about again, and the dreadful voice had disappeared; the sweet flute-like tones of the child charmed the mother's ear anew. This time Césarine carried her daughter to the château; she would be separated from her no longer.

She begged Frédéric to accompany her; the latter consented and went to shake hands with the old captain, who said to him,—

"Why, I recognize you. You were at my niece's wedding ball."

"Yes, captain, it was I who prevented the groom from waltzing with Madame Boulard."

Césarine smiled and said,—

"Let us forget that, doctor! but what I shall not learn to forget is that I owe my daughter's existence to you. You told me that it would be

easy for me to prove my gratitude to you. Pray tell me how I may do so."

"Can you not guess, madame?"

Césarine hesitated, reddened, and at last answered,—

"I may be mistaken, doctor, I prefer that you should tell me yourself in what manner I can recognize what you have done."

"Well, it is that you will let me take you to Paris, to your husband, whose arms will be open to receive you. I assure you, he will be pleased to see you. His health is re-established, your presence will further renew it. Your separation was not serious, it was a freak on one side and vexation on the other. Come and restore a child to its father, a wife to her husband; hereafter, I have no doubt, you will all be happy."

Césarine held out her hand to Frédéric, saying to him,—

"You have acquired the right to make me do all that you wish."

"Believe me, you will not repent it."

"Uncle, monsieur begs me to return to my husband."

"He is right, and you will do well to do so, my niece. The comedies always end like that. After all, you have no grave wrongs with which to reproach yourself; there was nothing there but incompatibility of temper. Well, directly the tempers change there is no longer any incompatibility."

However, Césarine drew near to Frédéric and said to him, no longer in the hard overbearing tone she had formerly affected, but in those soft, insinuating accents which accorded so well with her sex,—

"You would like to take me to my husband?"

"Yes, and you have consented to that. Are you repenting already?"

"Oh, no, it is a happiness for me to be able to prove my gratitude to you, by doing what you ask of me; only—"

"Only? Finish—"

"You think that my husband will receive me well; but you may be mistaken—for I confess I have behaved wickedly to him."

"The moment you confess it, the wrong will be pardoned."

"Really? All the same I am not persuaded that my husband will be delighted to see me."

"And I can assure you that he will; I know Adolphe, he has an excellent heart, you confess you have been wrong, he is incapable of bearing rancor."

"Oh, wait! M. Duvassel, there is something painful to my self-love in thus going back to my home, especially if my husband is forewarned; if he should not come to meet me, I could not go in. We must find a way—nothing must be said to him beforehand—do you understand."

"Perfectly. Leave it to me! I shall act accord-

ingly, for I have means of knowing what goes on there; but let us start as quickly as possible; I am in haste to finish my work."

Césarine employed herself in preparing for her departure, asking only one day in order to pack all her belongings. Frédéric agreed to this and passed the night at the château. The captain was very pleased with him, because he drank stoutly and did not forbid his host to do the same.

"Is that how you treat the gout?" said the old seaman. "Good enough! I shall take you for my doctor."

"Captain, you must go to excess in nothing, that is my only prescription for that obstinate malady. Why, as for that, live as you ordinarily do, deprive yourself of nothing that pleases you; for I have noticed one thing, the gout is never put to flight by any privation. Purge yourself, drink herb tea, stay in a corner of your fireside, and the gout will come and find you there; it cannot do worse when you go your own gait."

The next day Césarine said good-by to her uncle, who said to her,—

"I hope to see you back here shortly, with your husband; I will not receive you again without him; for with all those conventions, those secret meetings of women, you have made a good deal of noise and done some mighty poor business; in fact, you made me eat Lundi-Gras' cooking, and I won't let you try to make a cook of him again."

They reached Paris. Césarine, with her baby and her maid, went to Frédéric Duvassel's, where they were to wait his choice of a propitious moment to bring the wandering sheep to her fold. The doctor was not long absent, and came back to say to the young mother,—

"Come, the moment is favorable; your husband is at the Palais, his servant has gone on some errands, and Adolphe's sister is alone. I have announced your return to her, at which she evinced the greatest delight; for she knows well that your presence will further establish her brother's health and bring back happiness to the household. Yes, come, your room is ready; go and instal yourself there with your little Georgette, and when he comes home and finds his wife there, your husband will not believe that she has ever left him."

Césarine did all Frédéric told her; a carriage took her to her home, and her heart beat quickly as she saw her house; her emotion was keen when she found herself in her apartment; but Elvina embraced her several times.

"Oh, I knew well that you would come back," she said; "I knew well that you could not always live far from us."

Césarine settled herself in her room, placed her child's cradle beside her bed, put on one of the simple gowns she had been in the habit of wearing before her departure, then she took up some tapestry work and seated herself beside little

Georgette, who was asleep, and waited, saying to Frédéric,—

"Now, he may come. I wish he could believe that what has passed is a dream, and that I never abandoned him."

"Be easy, he will believe it."

Frédéric was able to affirm this to Césarine, for the evening before he had warned Adolphe of his wife's return, telling him at the same time of her desire that he should not reproach her for her follies; but Adolphe felt too happy to wish to recur to the past; besides, what good does it do to go back over the past? What is done, is done!

When at length Adolphe came home, young Elvina, trembling and blushing with pleasure, said to her brother,—

"Go into your wife's room; there, you will find some one you are always wishing for, and little Georgette whom you will be so pleased to kiss."

But Adolphe was not listening to his sister, already he was in his wife's room. He could not restrain an exclamation of joy at seeing her, and she could not keep back the tears, when her husband covered his child with kisses. These were the first tears of joy she had shed, and she was quite surprised to feel that sometimes one is happier when weeping than when laughing.

Then the young couple threw themselves into each other's arms. But not a word passed, not a reproach, not a sentence which could recall the past.

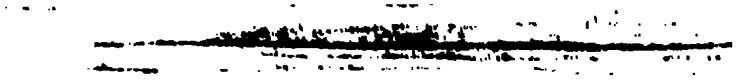
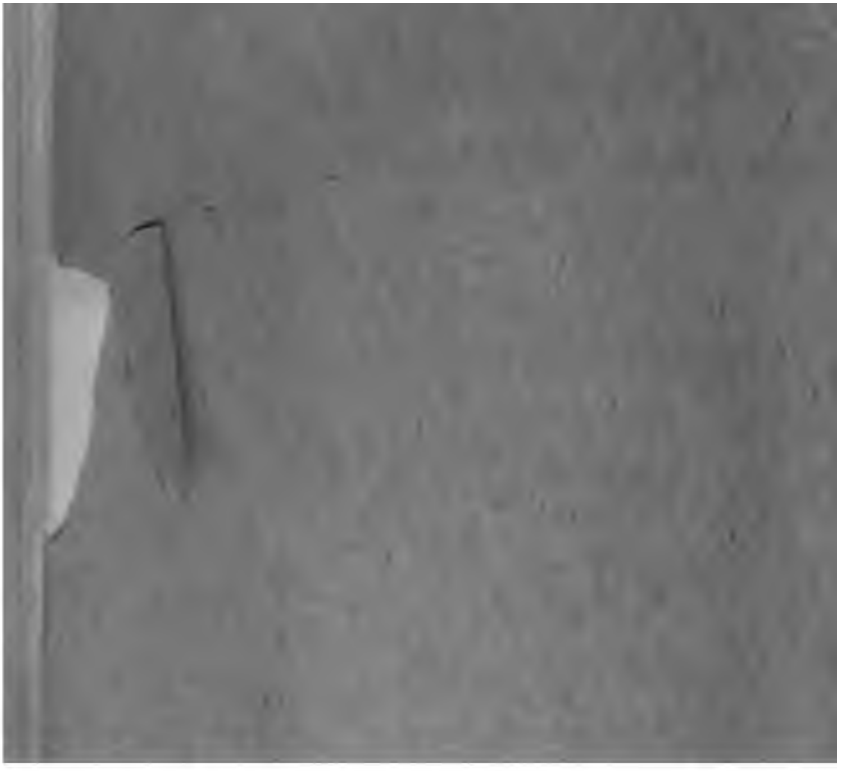
They were reconciled; and, where peace is made, of what use is it to talk of the war?

But when Frédéric came to see the married couple, Césarine took him by the hand and presented him to her husband, saying to the latter,—

"My dear, this is he who saved your daughter's life; but for him, we should have lost her!"

Adolphe took Frédéric's hand.

"I owe you my daughter," said he, "I owe you my wife also; in fact, I owe you so much that I can never hope to repay you."

Some months later Gustave and Elvina were married; and the latter was always contented to be just a woman in her household.

As to the other ladies who had played the parts of men in the Pantalon fraternity, do they fill them still? I think not. Women have too many attractions, charms, grace, tact, and mischief to wish to abdicate the throne of women merely that they may resemble the masculine sex.